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Cover picture: "Castle and Swans with Totem Poles" by Scottie Wilson, which is now on show at the Gillian Jasco Gallery, 42 Inverness Street, London NW1. An article on Scottie Wilson's work by Alasdair Gray appears on page 277.

## Invoking the heroic age of Islam

Hugh Kennedy

EHSSAN YAR-SHATER (Editor)  
*The History of Al-Tabari*  
Volume 27. Translated by J. A. Williams.  
250pp. \$29.50.  
087395 8845  
Volume 37. Translated by G. Saliba.  
164pp. \$34.50.  
087395 0544  
Volume 38. Translated by F. Rosenthal.  
250pp. \$29.50.  
087395 8764  
Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Tabari's *History of the Prophets and Kings*, the great epic of the early Muslim community, now for the first time being translated into English, is one of the classics of world historiography. Despite the fact that he wrote his *magnum opus* in Arabic, Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Tabari was not an Arab by birth but a Persian, born at Amul, the capital of the verdant, almost tropical province of Tabaristan (whence he took his surname) on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. He was born in 839, some two centuries after the Muslim conquests, at a time when Islam was beginning to make large numbers of converts among the Zoroastrians of this very conservative area. Like many intelligent young Iranians of his generation, he set out when little more than a boy to acquire the fundamentals of an Arab-Islamic education, starting off with the religious sciences, law, the traditions passed down from Muhammad and, above all, the Qur'an. To complete his education he had to leave his homeland, cut off as it was from the main centres of learning by the rugged Elburz mountains, and travel first to the regional capital of Rayy, just to the south of modern Tehran, and then to the metropolis of Baghdad. He continued to travel, mostly in Iraq, although he made one extended visit to Egypt to gather information from scholars there and he also revisited his native Tabaristan on several occasions.

It was Baghdad, however, that became his real home and where he died in 923; and his writing shows his intimate knowledge of and affection for the city. For most of his residence there, Baghdad was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphs, the generally acknowledged leaders of the Muslim community, who wielded reduced but still considerable power from behind the walls of their vast and opulent palaces on

the eastern banks of the Tigris. But Tabari's chosen milieu was not that of the court, with its extravagance, corruption, drunkenness and violent intrigue, but the sober, bourgeois world of commercial Baghdad. The quarter of the city he settled in was known as a haunt of grammarians and his friends and neighbours were to be found among those pillars of respectable Muslim society, the merchants and shopkeepers. These were the people who listened to his discourses in the small mosques of the neighbourhood or in each other's houses and it was with them that he enjoyed one of his favourite diversions, taking picnics in the Baghdad countryside. Those who knew him commented on his fastidious manners, not least at table; he was careful to keep food out of his beard and even when he spat, he spat decorously.

While not ostentatiously wealthy, he had private means, income from family properties in Tabaristan that was brought to him by pilgrims making their way to Mecca. This allowed him to devote himself to his work and follow the disciplined daily routine that his writing demanded. It also allowed him to be independent in his views; he was no subservient court historian surviving on favours and hand-outs. He himself was well aware how valuable his financial freedom was, refusing to accept patronage from ambitious politicians anxious to gain the approval of this increasingly respected intellectual. At the same time he viewed popular religious enthusiasm with some disdain and at one time made himself so unpopular by satirizing the crudely anthropomorphic view of God espoused by the Hanbalites that the police had to be called to protect his house from the fury of the mob.

Tabari was, perhaps, a recognizable type of rather austere bachelor, translated into the environment of bourgeois Baghdad a thousand years ago, but his intellectual achievement was enormous, if rather formidable, although he made one extended visit to Egypt to gather information from scholars there and he also revisited his native Tabaristan on several occasions.

For the historian, however, and for most non-Muslims, his great work is the later *History of the Prophets and Kings* (probably pub-

lished in 915, a point discussed by F. Rosenthal in his introduction to Volume 38 of the new translation). The writing of history was not generally accepted as a subject for serious study in the schools of Baghdad, any more than it was in the universities of Gibbon's England, but the transition from the science of commentary to the science of history was an easy and natural one; much of the commentary was by its nature historical and it also gave Tabari a thorough training in the science of the *isnad*. The *isnad* is a distinguishing feature of Islamic scholarship of the classical period; in order to ensure the accuracy of the verbal record, and above all that the actual words of the Prophet were preserved, it became the practice to list all those who had transmitted the tradition from original utterance to the time when it was recorded, often two centuries later, by the compiler. Truth was of the essence and it was felt necessary to check on the dates when the informants were known to have lived and to ensure that they were men of good character.

This need to verify the verbal report had a profound effect on early Islamic intellectual life. It created a demand for vast biographical dictionaries of transmitters, a form of historical source whose full potential is only now being realized by modern scholarship, and it also influenced the writing of more general history. It meant that authors like Tabari were careful to record the sources of their information, even when it concerned matters of no religious significance. They also attached great importance to preserving the exact wording of the account as it reached them and large parts of the text of Tabari's *History* read like juxtaposed fragments of original sources rather than as a steadily connected narrative. The narrative is introduced by the names of those who are held to have transmitted it and what follows is usually an eyewitness account of the events in question. Occasionally, in later sections of the work, as he approaches his own lifetime, Tabari seems to have incorporated extensive, and rather tedious, official reports of military actions.

The compiler himself is retiring to the point of invisibility; only rarely does overt editorial comment or judgment intrude and much of this consists of general approval of Muslim military efforts against the Byzantines and other non-Muslims and, in the less expansive years of his own time, of reflections on the reasons for Muslim defeats. There is also a firm but discreet commitment to the existing social and religious order. Typically, Tabari shows his

disapproval of radical movements, like the rising of the people of Baghdad during the Caliphate of al-Amin in the early ninth century, not by outright condemnation but by including anecdotes and accounts which show the rebels in a bad light.

One happy result of this technique is that the writing is often fresh, vivid and direct. Tabari's own narrative style is simple and fast-moving, the finest sort of classical Arabic prose and almost free from conceit and artifice. The narratives he includes in his text reflect the whole range of Arabic styles, from elaborate official correspondence and high-flown rhetoric to coarse battlefield colloquial. It is difficult to convey all these differences in translation, but in the original they are a delight to the Arabist.

The same low-key approach can be seen in Tabari's attitude to Islam. There can be no doubt that he was a deeply religious man, in a conservative rather than an ecstatic or mystical way, yet there is a striking absence of overt religious comment. God is not portrayed as an immediate and effective agent in the affairs of men, punishing impiety and wickedness, nor is political failure ascribed to moral or spiritual misbehaviour; and this absence of divine intervention means that the whole work is much more humanist in its explanations than the ecclesiastical chronicles of Byzantium and the early medieval west.

Tabari's concern for Islam is shown in another way, in his almost complete lack of interest in the Christian or Jewish communities of his time. Non-Muslims were then probably still in a majority in the Muslim world, although this was rapidly changing, yet they play no role in his work at all. This is partly a reflection of their lack of political importance, (and Tabari's is essentially a political history), but also of the nature of that history. He saw himself as the compiler of the annals of the Muslim community and, after the coming of Islam, the affairs of other religious groups ceased to be of any significance.

This mosaic technique might at first sight suggest that Tabari's history has no real claims to greatness, that it is no more than a vast compilation of sources, lumped together by an industrious but uncritical mediocrity. But the whole is much more than the sum of its parts and Tabari produced the epic of the early Muslim community, showing the working of God's will through the ancient Prophets and Kings until the coming of Islam. The narrative begins, as perhaps all good histories should, with

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the creation of the world. It continues with the succession of the Prophets familiar from the Old Testament, with Adam and Noah and Abraham, but Tabari interweaves with them stories from the ancient Iranian tradition, of Jamshid and Faridun and the long succession of pre-Islamic monarchs from ancient mythical heroes to the Sassanid kings of the fifth and sixth centuries AD, firmly grounded in historical reality; indeed Tabari's history remains the most important literary source available to us for that important but obscure era of Persian history. He also describes the life of Jesus and gives a bare list of the Roman Emperors from Augustus to Heraclius.

These preliminaries take up the first thousand-odd pages of the printed text but it is with the life of the Prophet Muhammad that Tabari really gets into his stride and it becomes clear that his central theme is the unfolding of God's purpose through the history of the Muslim community, its triumphs and conquests but also its divisions and failures.

Tabari lived in an age when it must have seemed that the heroic days of early Islam were over. Baghdad was still the seat of the caliphs but they struggled to maintain their leadership against ideological challenges and increasingly powerful separatist forces. The major military event of his life was not the sweeping conquest of non-Muslim peoples but rather the agonizingly slow war of attrition fought by government forces against the slave rebels of the marshes of southern Iraq. Worse was to come in his old age when Baghdad itself was threatened by the unpredictable Carmathian rebels and their bedouin followers. It was against this sombre background that Tabari set out to show that the Muslim community was a great and lasting institution, with a history as rich and inspiring as the Old Testament or the ancient Iranian epic, and that, despite present troubles, it would survive: it is this purpose and vision which makes his work great.

Tabari's work was always treasured and respected by Muslim intellectuals, and later writers of Muslim history, like Ibn al-Athir in the thirteenth century, were heavily dependent on it. Within half a century of its publication it had also been translated into Persian. But despite the esteem in which it was held, so vast a work was always vulnerable, partly because later Muslim civilization, like our own, often preferred to have its knowledge in precise, epi-

temes rather than in such fullness, but even more because its vast length made copying the whole a formidable undertaking. It is said that the original ran to 4,000 manuscript pages and the printed edition amounts to some 9,000. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that complete manuscript copies became very rare. This did not mean that people lost interest. In seventeenth-century Istanbul, the cultured, if cruel, viziers of the Koprulu family made a serious

attempt to collect the entire text for the library they founded. The manuscripts they obtained can still be seen in the elegant little building where they were placed, a haven of scholarly tranquillity in a particularly busy and noisy part of modern Istanbul. In the next century, Ahmet III (1703-30), who built the charming library in the Tepkapi Palace, made another attempt to collect a complete text. But, despite their

access to all the libraries of their empire, neither vizier or sultan was able to complete the task.

The entire work, except for a few short lacunae, was finally reconstructed in the late nineteenth century by a team of Arabists led by the Dutch scholar M. J. de Goeje at the great centre of Oriental scholarship, the University of Leiden, and published, in fifteen volumes, by E. J. Brill between 1879 and 1901. Using manuscripts from European and Indian libraries, as well as these in the Middle East, they were able, just, to piece together the entire text, although the survival of some parts depended on a single manuscript. At a time when Orientalism has come under fire from many quarters, it is worth reminding ourselves of such impressive achievements, infinitely more difficult in the days before photocopying and microfilm, when all manuscripts had to be copied by hand before they could be brought together.

Since its publication, de Goeje's edition, a monument of nineteenth-century scholarship, with its Latin summaries and footnotes, has held the field as the definitive edition and it forms the basis of the new English translation, the first three volumes of which have now appeared. So ambitious a project may well provoke some academic scepticism: is anyone actually going to read thirty-eight volumes? Will the translation be accurate enough to satisfy the specialist without intimidating the student and general reader? Clearly there are risks and it would be wrong to underestimate the difficulties of translation. The text is full of strange words and phrases, and ancient and long-forgotten colloquialisms whose meanings are as obscure to modern Arabs as to anyone else. Yet the translation is worth while, partly because it will make this great work available to people who cannot otherwise approach it and will show something of the greatness of the classic Muslim intellectual tradition to a wider audience, but partly because it should stimulate new researches into the work itself. Questions like the complexities of the manuscript tradition, the nature of the sources that Tabari used and the details of his own biography have received virtually no attention up until now. It is hoped that this translation will be only the beginning of a sustained programme of Tabari studies, for an opus so magnificent as his deserves nothing less.



An eighteenth-century scribe wearing the *kadibit kavuk*, red *salvar* and blue *kafan*; taken from Miniatures from Turkish Manuscripts: Catalogue and subject index of paintings in the British Library and the British Museum by Noreh M. Tilley (144pp, with 54 black-and-white plates. British Library, £45. 0 904634 71 0).

## The pattern and the patina

Roy Foster

DAVID LOWENTHAL.  
*The Past is a Foreign Country*  
489pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£27.50 (paperback, £9.95)  
0 521 294 900

"History" no longer concerns itself with facts, but with attitudes; and in a rather solipsistic way, attitudes towards history itself have now become the object of intensive study. The process began with the growth of "historiography" as a sub-discipline: the study of history as it has been written rather than as it "actually" happened. This topic used simply to provide relaxation for eminent historians while waiting for the *Proceedings* to roll in, but post-structuralist fall-out has encouraged its being taken further. In recent years by a new breed of exhaustive explorer.

As intellectual "mentality" (notably in the nineteenth century) becomes a subject for research, the presentation of the national past becomes a preoccupation. Patrick Wright's recent essays (*On Living in an Old Country*) were a case in point, illustrating the desire of now-left intellectuals to interpret the culture of a national historical sense as a more complex cultural formation than simply another dose of opium for the people. Wright none the less tends to interpret the raising of the Mary Rose, ruralist theories in shell advertising, and the way houses like Cuckoo Abbey or Montmorency become national causes célèbres as evidence of a neurosis peculiar to the late bourgeois world. And this is a mistake no one

For *The Past is a Foreign Country* tries to take in everything. The subject is perception of the past, from antiquity to modern times; the uses and abuses of received ideas of history, categorized under titles like "Goals in the Revisited Past" and "The Past as Experienced and Believed Memory". Despite his odd comment that "little research explicitly focuses on how people in general see, value or understand the past", it draws heavily on recent work by scholars like Francis Haskell, Charles Delbosc, John Burrow, and the several authors of *The Invention of Tradition*. One gets the impression of a good idea, conceived some time ago, and overtaken by recent publications.

The major problem is an utter inability to select, arrange and most of all, reject. One result is that practically every statement is referenced (why does the fact that Abbotsford was gas-lit need to be defended by a citation?) Another, more bizarre, outcome is that the copious footnotes are likely to refer as unquestioningly to an article in the *Observer Magazine* as to an antiquarian treatise or a learned article. Sheridan Morley jostles with Isaiah Berlin, and *Dr Who* and *The Time Warrior* carries the same weight in *The Culture of Cities*. More worryingly, the bewildering and eclectic range of even fictional sources is taken at face value. The opinions articulated in *Nemesis of Faith* are identified as those of J. A. Froude the historian, not as ideas put in the mouth of the novel's protagonist; and by extension, fiction is throughout registered as direct evidence. As a Malpas character tells us, "it is the sort of introduction which apparently validates any statement that follows, and which, in fact, is a preoccupation with

Perhaps the *reductio ad absurdum* comes when Lowenthal chooses an illustration of the *frisson* experienced when visiting the scene of a historically famous action: his example is the Reichenbach Falls, celebrated for a duel to the death which never happened outside the imagination of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

This lack of discrimination attaches to many of the other "examples" which pile up mercilessly throughout the book. Can Lowenthal really believe that "the man who hoarded thousands of jars of his own excrement" is a relevant expression of "attachment to the past"? Or that seven pages' laborious survey of attitudes to old age in humans adds materially to his theme? Yet he is curiously brief and offhand about the historiographical ideas of the past as a repository of guidance and example to the present, surely central to any idea the book may be trying to advance. Meanwhile, proximity rules; three pages explain that reproductions are not the same as originals, and a chapter generally starts by saying the same thing in as many different ways as possible.

Even where an interesting theme is encountered, like the vogue for "time-travelling", the range of references is lightweight and essentially unhistorical. Possibly the most astounding omission from the fifty-seven-page bibliography (even in a book which deals at length with Relevance historiography yet never mentions Ginzburg) is Carlyle's *Past and Present*. And when it comes to the minefield of historical events, the received and old-fashioned view of "crises" like the Hyde Park riots or the effects of the 1830 revolution is invariably adopted. The treatment of temporal

hopelessly confuses the chronological sequence necessary even to intellectual history. And in many cases a simple explanation is tortuously avoided: a discussion of why furniture is subjected to "aging" techniques allows several irrelevant pages of technical details about the weathering process, but never mentions the straightforward fact that age, probably rarity, and enhanced commercial value increase in proportion to each other.

When a brief attempt is made to pull a few conclusions together after 400 pages of this kind of thing, it is too late. So contemporary insecurities are said to breed an attachment to the imagined certitudes of history; but this is nothing new. Nor is the fictionalization of historical "events". Nor, above all, is the revelation that historians are not impartial - though non-historians tend to deliver the statement with maximum *ex cathedra* condemnation. Bopka like Lowenthal's set out to explore the territory of intellectual and psychological history so excitingly prospected in recent years, but armed with such a vague and chafy guide to the foreign country of the past, all the reader is left with is a tour of the most demanding tourist track.

P. J. Vakkari's *The Modern History of Egypt* was first published in 1969 and has now been brought out in its third edition under the title *The History of Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (546pp. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20.00; paperback, £9.95; 0 297 78742 X). The new edition considers the period from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of 1984, covering the

## Passion, purity, innocence and (European) experience

Adam Mars-Jones

EDMUND WHITE  
*Caracole*  
342pp. Pinter, £9.95.  
0 330 292 91 9

*Caracole* is less a novel by the author of *A Boy's Own Story*, as the cover announces in justified eagerness to close a sale, than a novel by the author of *Forgetting Elena* (1973). In that book, Edmund White described the experiences of a man who comes to consciousness in a sophisticated society, its physical details (shared houses, beaches, tea dances) suggesting an American resort, but its culture having a rigorous obliquity reminiscent of Imperial Japan; each gesture in the world of that book had a prescribed meaning which the hero had to work out for himself, without ever admitting to being in the dark. It was the richest and most mysterious example of the amnesia novel, a sub-genre which includes Martin Amis's *Other People* and Eva Figes's *Nelly's Version*.

In *Caracole* the society is again a collage, but this time the sources are European; Venice and Paris are the most obvious models for the city in which most of the action takes place. A European setting, however gorgeously transformed by fantasy, is appropriate to the development of White's thinking: he sees experience as by nature European, that is, as layered and multifaceted, any seeming grossness being merely a ganglion of subtleties not yet teased into clarity. Even in its slang the book turns its back on America, and opts for pallid British forms: "tart", "twit", "trendiness", "infamous boaster" even.

The city is occupied by "the conquerors", who draw it of resources while paying lip-service to its cultural eminence. The six principal characters of the novel make various shifting compromises with the authorities, none of them identifying wholeheartedly with the invaders but all putting up no more than token resistance: they are certainly too sophisticated to throw in their lot with the patriots. Their lives intertwine in a plot that suggests opera, but is carried off with considerable intensity and something very like conviction.

The story begins, though, far from the city, on a decayed estate called Madder Pink, where the teenager Gabriel tries to keep his collapsing family (mother fat and catatonic, father indifferent, children hungry) in some sort of rudimentary working order, and also carries on an affair with the tribal princess Angelica. These fifty pages are the least confident in the book, and give the novel an uncertain start. White inserts an occasional sentence of stylized spondee ("Just come day, go day", for instance) to enact the stopped flow of primitive life, but otherwise his style makes no concessions to a rural setting, where it is spectacularly out of place.

Any bumpkin can find things beautiful; an aesthete consults ideas of beauty. Such a temperamental likely to regard unmediated nature as downright sloppy, and if called on to represent it at any length will improve on it beyond all recognition. There are passages in the early part of *Caracole* where the sentences stretch on in their even glory as far as the eye can read, like virgin forests of topiary.

The social world of the country should present fewer difficulties; no human arrangement is actually unsophisticated, although dominant groups can sometimes succeed in dramatizing other groups as defective. It's only in a court or a city, nevertheless, where everything already represents a conscious choice on someone's part, that a ravishing rhetoric like Edmund White's can plausibly be housed in a character. But here in the country the point of view, nominally Gabriel's, can see in someone's eyes "a charming rube" in the hesitation of sincerity. Only in a city or a court is a taste for practical anthropology a part of the survival skills of the tribe; but here a tribesman attending Gabriel during his trial marriage to Angelica, asked to explain a particular passage of ritual, stirs and says: "These ways... beautiful, no? I love the old ways. Very religious. He kissed his bunched fingers with a look of... Very folkloric." The tone of the book can accommodate this strayed Firbank. For his part, Gabriel, in his

later, the tribesman is a duly reformed character, purged of camp and using the ritual language of marital innuendo. He promises Gabriel much work for his broom, many juicy figs.

The most successful dramatization in the book of the contrast between city and country isn't in the first section at all, but in a splendid paragraph describing the Great Return to the People, when, one summer, intellectuals from the capital trooped into the fields to identify with the peasants and their labour. The noble experiment lasted barely a week. The city women offended the locals with their "pedantic licentiousness"; the farmers needed their sleep, but the intellectuals wanted to stay up all night, "flushed with compassion". They didn't realize they were consuming mere food that they were producing "until they were unexpectedly greeted not with gratitude but a bill".

By burlesquing the assumptions of the intellectuals, and not approaching the country direct, White can prevent his prose from turning everything into a *fête champêtre*. Otherwise his version of pastoral is rather too much like one of those high-toned theatrical productions which feature real turf and real water on stage. His relentless *tour de force* of epiphany description fit one of his descriptions of Gabriel: "he had succeeded in subjecting the involuntary to his will, a success that surely counted as a failure".

*Caracole* comes into its own from the moment that Gabriel is rescued from Madder Pink and moves in with his uncle Mateo in the capital. The major fascination of the book is its abstract weirdness; this may be a confected society, but its mechanics are convincing. Familiar elements stand out disturbingly without the protective colouring of naturalness. Behemians refuse to commit themselves even an hour in advance, their social lives being utterly expressive and impromptu, but turn up doggedly for every rout. Musicians at a reception mutter awkwardly from performers to servants as soon as they stop playing, "still amphibious, half guests, glasses of champagne empty in their hands and deliberately not refilled".

White has a particularly delicate perception of role-playing, of the way an identity must be built up from the registers available (many rewarding parts inevitably being pre-empted by others), and cannot be plucked from air. He insists, not on the coexistence merely, but the interdependence of real and fictitious emotion.

White's literary personality dominates the book. Every sentence in a novel carries an implied promise, the promises in aggregate making up what we call readability. The plot of *Caracole* is soundly constructed, but its promise is not *Relax, I'm telling you a story*, but rather *Relax, I the writer am here in everything*. Every page, consequently, is a riot of nuance.

Not all of this prodigious activity can be laid to the account of the characters, though each of them has show-stopping riffs of introspection. Gabriel, in particular, can seem like an *idiot savant*, his naïve disclaimers recast in a style of lavish brilliance. There is in any case something odd about using him as an innocent eye, to whom the city's artificiality is patent, when *Caracole* so consistently portrays innocence as tactical. Perhaps the disparity between character and narrative voice should be invisible by convention, "like the bands of puppeteers", as the narrative voice observes in a slightly different context; but if so the convention should be evenly enforced, and not blurred by an intermittent psychological realism. White is something like a ventriloquist who cannot at the last moment bear the dummy on his knee to have tones less rounded than his own, since they are what he has spent his life perfecting.

The point of view shifts round, from Gabriel to Mathilda, the city's reigning intellectual, with whom he has an affair, to her son Daniel, tortured poet, to the actress Edwige, with whom Gabriel also has an affair, but it is always most at home with Mateo. Mateo's life as a self-doubting socialite and anxious gallant is disrupted by Gabriel's arrival and the need to look after him. His avuncular feelings become deeply affectionate, and Gabriel returns them; but Mateo has also, unknown to Gabriel, set up Angelica in a little flat of her own, and after a period of intimate unease has become her lover.

Mateo's action, both in and out of society,

both in and out of love, his manipulateness always bound in with his altruism, brings out the best in Edmund White. His fondness for the character is signalled obliquely by an opening blast of irony, which never returns so rawly: Mateo is disappointed that Gabriel isn't handsome - he would have been flattered by a resemblance. The character has received the prescribed dosage of irony, and can now be taken seriously.

White in any case takes care to restrict the operations of irony. A charming passage describes how Gabriel sees irony looming darkly in everything his sophisticated uncle says, obliging Mateo to disengage from reel and earned emotion out of politeness. At the crisis of Mateo's affair with Angelica a distinction is drawn, as a gloss on "that little incidental smile that in highly conscious people accompanies a strong emotion", between cheap irony, which disowns experience, and the expensive kind that acknowledges it. Irony is too general a structuring element in the world to be a satisfactory response to it.

It is necessary for the book's balance, and even existence, for emotion to be refurbished as well as stripped. The ink in White's pen is not only a solvent but an emulsion. The habit of scepticism, as the narrative voice observes apropos of Mathilda, "like a design of oblique lines, needed to be placed against the grid of love's credulity".

Love in *Caracole* is "a progressive illness, one that starts as self-hallucination, an act of parody, and ends as a wholly real, involuntary malady that kills us or something vital in us". Love is an inviolable contract that binds no less for that. It must be said, though, that the rhetoric in the book that reinstates purities and passions is generally less successful than the rhetoric that breaks them down, which has a special brilliance - as if an acid was leaching glitter from the metals it attacked.

There is after all no overriding logic that insists on love presiding over the other illusions. One of the book's epigraphs, from *Mid-*

*dlemarch*, is bravely borrowed: "It is so painful in you, Celia, that you will look at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man's face." The borrowing is brave because everything in Edmund White's literary personality concentrates on the way that behaviour is mediated by convention, precisely by a toilette; why should a soul make its appearance on a face, if all places?

In a recent and eloquent tribute to Christopher Isherwood, White pointed out the paradox of a man who as a matter of religious conviction disbelieved in the unity of human personality (described by White as "a useful illusion for a novelist") choosing as his literary form the dynamic portrait of an individual. Something similar happens in White's own case. He questions the unity of personality not on religious principle but from minute social observation. The moment when a character enters a fixed relationship with the world is always an ominous one in his writings. Edwige in *Caracole* is murdered, but she has never stopped negotiating her value, while Mathilda, becoming wholly the avenging lover, dies into a rôle she mistakes for an identity, taking in passing resemblance for a definitive portrait. It's significant that both this novel and *Forgetting Elena* end with the hero occupying, however accidentally, a public position, as if the book's freedom to speculate depended on its hero's non-alignment.

This amounts to an odd sort of Darwinism, as if evolution was the survival of the socially flexible. But there is no doubt, despite the book's attempt at musical balance, that White loads the dice in favour of Mateo and against Mathilda, whose portrayal has a certain sourness, both vague and pointed, as if she was a minor character in Fr Rolfe, being given a drubbing under cover of prose-poetry. Edmund White is nevertheless a full-time aesthete and only a part-time moralist, a busier bee than wasp.

In the long run, it is *Caracole's* texture that

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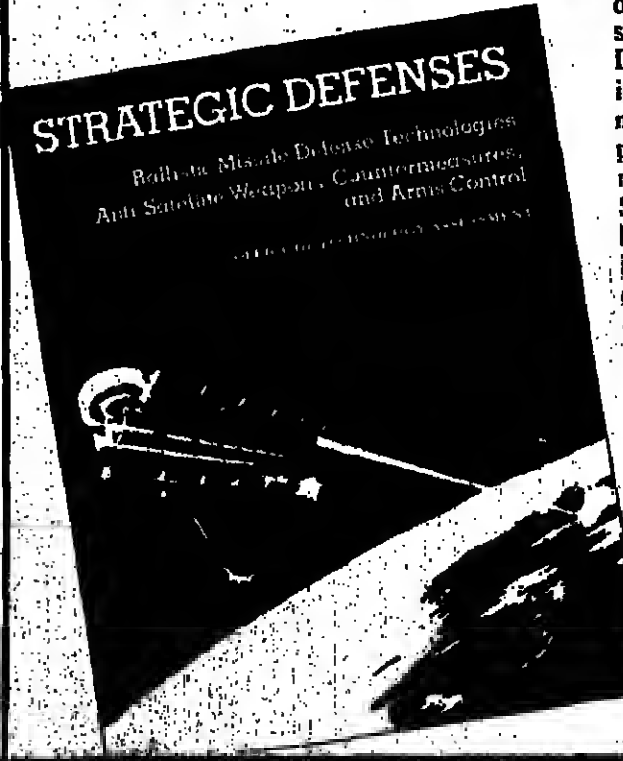
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## Out of the thin man's shadow

Julian Symons

MATTHEW J. BRUCCOLI and RICHARD LAYMAN (Editors)  
The New Black Mask Quarterly  
226pp. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$7.95.  
LOREN D. ESTLEMAN  
Sugartown  
220pp. 0 333 40870 5  
JEREMIAH HEALY  
Blunt Darts  
192pp. 0 333 41378 2  
JOHN LUTZ  
Nightlines  
196pp. 0 333 41381 4  
Macmillan. £7.95 each.

will make friends, or lose them. Every melodic line is fully ornamented; the conceits are as vital to the progress of the book as they are in a Craig Raine poem, or a Tom Robbins novel, come to that. This style is more than most a matter of taste. White's rhetoric has a Jamesian fullness, but none of James's leasure; it has more in common, perhaps, with Proust. A sentence like this could easily find a home in *Caracole*:

A quelques pas, un grand gaillard en livrée réval, immobile, sculptural, inutile, comme ce guerrier purement décoratif qu'on voit dans les tableaux les plus tumultueux de Maniegna, songer, appuyé sur son bouclier, tandis qu'on se précipite et qu'on égorge à côté de lui.

The playful memorializing of a casual posture is characteristic.

At his feeblest, White goes in for elegant variation, saying "adipose cummerbund" for *spare tyre*, or leaving a character eat raven instead of crow. The sheer density of invention attests a bottomless terror of saying the obvious. It sometimes seems that this is a sensibility which would find anything as straightforward as an oak an embarrassment, unless it had a galaxy of trifles stowed away in its roots – or failing that a patch of discoloured bark like a mole under an arm.

White's rhetoric is sophisticated, but it is also highly specialized. A conceit in a Craig Raine poem taps energy from the incongruity of its materials, and teases the reader with apparent irrelevance for maximum, and delayed, impact; a conceit in a Tom Robbins novel conveys, rather complacently, the absurdity of comparing anything with anything else in a rich, unrepeatable world. White's conceits, by contrast, have a curiously homogenizing effect; they smooth out differences and seal similarities. When Gabriel imagines Angelica's heart, "as stately as a frog at night", the reader feels a twinge of hilarity and then thinks better of it, guiltily ignorant of frogs at night. When Mateo compares Gabriel with a potato, which, "washed, bruised, forgotten and cast under the sink, will sprout horribly in the dark, rampant with life since it is not only a comically banal vegetable but also a seed", the conceit elevates both potato and Gabriel, buoying them up in the same super-saturated medium.

When White's conceits overreach they go authentically gaga. Here is Gabriel reminiscing in the middle of coitus ("sting" is his contrived word for orgasm):

Not that he himself was repelled by the odor; far from it. It was the smell of a stable, of his own long-gone stings in the thunder-box back at Madder Pile, the smell of steam lifting off those black soles of red he'd produced, that pair of blood-saturated out-frosts morning in the echoing immensity of yet another day, as though time were freezing manson and he its caretaker bravely rubbing a fire into life with hard black and fluid white emulsions, the demure of being human.

More often, the conceits retain a decorum which only the scenes of sexual exchange, notably successful in themselves and quite unlike the home life expected of a co-author of *The Joy of Gay Sex*, do anything to disrupt. Here is Gabriel with Angelica:

he understood why people might give their favourite goddess eight arms and four faces. Those weren't enough but they did at least suggest the way a girl could crowd a hollow with herself – a pair of arms reaching out to clasp him as she turned her head away in profile, lips lifted, eyes downcast; another two hands to push her hair back from eyes that opened, brightening, two arms to bang at her sides and a face to lower in submission until he buried her side again and she moaned and sank to the ground below her, frustrated and yearning; then once more glorious face to swim down towards his, her lips full, her breath fast and shallow, her last two arms pressing his head against her one and only but wildly beating heart.

This is lovely, but also supremely calculated. The project may be passion, but the doing of it is scrupulous. The dizzy rhetoric describes exactly the promised eight arms and four faces, no more, no less; every extravagance is carefully budgeted, and the cadenza is also an inventory.

These quibbles are certainly childish; but a reviewer is not merely a child but a hired chair. There are things in *Caracole* that would win anyone over. This suavely alien world can give intense and almost continuous pleasure. Edmund White is a great dandy, and *Caracole* is only

The American crime story today suffers from companion with its brilliant beginnings. The creation of a novel or short story using specifically American language, racy, energetic, powerful and crude, was exemplified by the work that appeared in the pulp magazine *Black Mask* during the 1920s and '30s. The magazine's most famous contributor was Dashiell Hammett, and after the best of Hammett what way was there to go but down? Yet almost miraculously, as it seems now, Hammett was succeeded by Chandler, and Chandler by Ross Macdonald, two writers who acknowledged a debt to Hammett yet produced wholly individual work, free of the thin man's shadow.

The recognition that those early days were great ones is made in the title of a new quarterly which is, the editors say, "an expression of homage to the original *Black Mask*". The new magazine will consider British and other European crime stories, but the emphasis is naturally American. The first number includes "Backfire", a screen outline written by Chandler but never bought by a studio, a story by George V. Higgins, the first instalment of a previously unpublished novel by Jim Thompson, an interview with Robert B. Parker and an extract from one of his novels, among other material.

This is a good first issue, but the contents suggest the difficulty writers in this field find in breaking free of a greatly inhibiting past. Hammett, Chandler and Macdonald are hard acts to follow, but easy writers to copy. Robert B. Parker was from the beginning deep in debt to Chandler and remains so after several novels, his observation when interviewed that unlike Hemingway, Chandler and Hammett he writes about love, carrying very little weight. One does not read the Spenser novels for their love interest any more than to read about Spenser's cooking skills. Is it possible to find writers of "hard-boiled" novels who do not make obeisance to the masters? The search has led to the discovery of men whose work has appeared mostly in paperback originals – Jim Thompson; David Goodis; Jerome Charyn, Harry Whittogton (the last unknown in Britain, unfamiliar to critics even in his native America, but a cult figure in France). Thompson, also widely read in France, is undoubtedly the best of them; and now, a decade after his unnoticed death, his work is receiving critical notice. His writing has energy and some distinctive turns of phrase ("all of us started the game with a crooked cue"), but for much of the time his crudely violent work, like that of his fellow writers in paperback, hardly seems to derive from pen or typewriter. It has the flatness of tape recordings made in sleazy and brutal places, faithful perhaps as documentary report but lacking the directing intelligence that might make it into interesting fiction. Elmore Leonard, who has succeeded in breaking out of this literary sub-world after years of writing paperback thrillers and Westerns, and is now being acclaimed in America as the best writer of "suspense" stories (American for the British "thriller") of today or any day, has done so at the cost of becoming, in the recent *Sick and Glad*, distinctly sentimental.

Yet the American crime story has a liveliness, sense of place and feeling for bitter comedy that its British counterpart generally lacks. Zomba Books, who published Thompson, Goodis and Charyn, and Pluto Press who were responsible for some American radical crime stories, seem to have suspended criminal operations for the moment, so that the new series coming from Macmillan is particularly welcome. Two of the first three are much

are on the way.

Loren D. Estleman's *Sugartown* is Detroit, used as a setting by Leonard in early books. It seems a city highly suitable for the operations of private eye Amos Walker, a place full of blasted neighbourhoods destroyed for the building of new car plants, where punks set fire to the few remaining houses just for fun, and the place looks "like tornado footage on the six o'clock news". Such areas alternate with districts like St Clair Shores, "hloek after block of nice residences, not too large, with all-weather driveways and lawns the size of money clips". Estleman loses nothing by comparison with Leonard in writing about Sugartown. His descriptions are never less than vivid, whether he is describing a head "bald as a thumb" or a murder scene with blood "splattered all over like a pressure cooker full of red cabbage blew up".

His detective Amos Walker charges \$250 a day, inflation having taken over since the Marlowe era. He is involved here with an old Polish woman trying to trace her grandson, who arrived home one day to find that his father had just shot his wife and daughter, then himself. What has happened to the little boy, Michael, whom she has not seen for years, old Mrs Evancek wants to know. Walker back-tracks sure-footedly through the past until he comes to a dead end: Michael was drowned in the California Gulf twelve months back, his best friend testifies to it. End of the case, then? But now Walker is hired by a very prickly Russian dissident to buy or warn off a man who's said to be a KGB agent. "He'll think the Kremlin fell on him", Amos Walker says confidently, but

things don't work out like that. . . . Estleman's school of Chandler, even to the plot convolutions, but the sharpest and most entertaining American import for a long time. An energetic Amos Walker story is included in the *New Black Mask Quarterly*.

Jeremiah Healy's *Blunt Darts*, a first novel, is almost as good as Estleman. The setting this time is Boston and environs, the private eye John Francis Cuddy, an insurance investigator sacked when he refused to authorize a claim which had never been looked at, and redeemed from alcoholism after his wife's death. The Boston scene is a sketch rather than Estleman's portrait, but well done. Client: another old lady wanting to find her teenage grandson Stephen, who's just disappeared. Fee: \$200 a day, apparently the going rate. Cuddy's warned off by Stephen's father, his Honor Judge Kinnington, and threatened by the judge's court officer who is apparently the judge's good right hand. There is plenty of very humour and jokiness here, although Cuddy should get out of the bad habit of talking to his dead wife. The plot has a real surprise at the end of it; this is altogether a promising, even brilliant début.

John Lutz's *Nightlines* is by comparison the standard article. Scene: St Louis; private eye name Nudger; fee not mentioned even to dead (no wonder Nudger always needs money). Problem: find who killed client's twin sister, user of illegal telephone "night lines" to make sexual contacts. This is a promising enough theme, but developments are unexciting. On this evidence Nudger will never be worth \$20 a day.

## In marriage and meat-queue

Lesley Chamberlain

JULIA VOZNESENSKAYA  
The Women's Decameron  
Translated by W. B. Linton  
330pp. Quartet. £9.95.  
0 7043 2555 1

Have you heard the one about the mother and daughter who sawed off their lover's legs when he wouldn't hand over his thirteenth-month pay packet? He kept saying he wouldn't succumb to their torture, he'd been a partisan. And what about the little ice skater whose male trainers decided to "free the ligaments" in her legs? Her mother drowned herself when she found out. These and many others among the 100 anecdotes which make up Julia Voznesenskaya's *Damskii Dekameron* are painful, bloody and horrific, and more evidence of the bizarre quality of Soviet Russian life. It has a particular failing for women. From the meat queue to the pleasures of the flesh Russian women are happy, but they crave a little civilization on the side. Voznesenskaya's title, which might have been better translated as *The Ladies' Decameron*, is an ironic pointer to the bourgeois graces and comforts Soviet culture excludes. Significantly none of the sex in this book is erotic.

Voznesenskaya, most prominent among the Soviet women activists at the end of the 1970s, founder of the group "Maria" before she left in 1980, has chosen fiction to explain the Soviet female lot. Ten women each tell one story a night to pass the ten days they spend quarantined in a maternity hospital. Their physical preoccupations may have something to do with their having just given birth, but the cameo social documentaries have a fearful life of their own. The best of them transcend the casual manner in which they are told – like the story about Albina, the skater, who grows up to be a promiscuous, sentimental Aeroflot hostess. The melodramatic, operatic conclusion to her childhood undoing is in the best Russian tradition, while the allusion to Nabokov points up the eternally childish mind of the narrator.

Yet the social and political implications of the stories are never far away. Albina's tale is satirically destructive of the official ideals of youth, sport and chastity. The Western reader is given to understand that unlike our own discontented Freudian rebels this is not a society

oedipal and pervasively policed, and that Lenin for that, because the arrival of the satellite can sometimes save a life. The whole is glued together by chance and tenderness, which is not quite enough when the cultural habit is for people to go at each other hammer and tong. The anecdotal form corresponds nicely to the reality of Soviet communal living, where life proceeds by unexpected leaps and bounds, jabbed by conflict and appetite.

Voznesenskaya, a balanced and ungrammatical writer, doesn't set out to make her women consistent or good. They contradict each other and relish their triumphs. You might think they had had enough of male brutes as they make their way through disgusting accounts of first love, seduction, divorce, farcical sex, infidelity, jealousy, rape, money and revenge. But they go on being delighted. They talk about helio hitches to each other but who cares? Bitchiness is one of the subtle ways of surviving in the pursuit of happiness, better certainly than resort to the axe. Marriage, even if it is temporary, matters for that bit of material comfort and security it can bring. The women narrators have their sexual whims and tricks and not all the men are beasts.

The women's political prejudices are merely exposed. The so-called "Party bigwig" Valentina, who initially inspires fear and distrust, turns out to be rather subtle and human. The quarantine allows the dissident Galina to get to know Valentina; and in turn these two ordinary women learn what it is to be Albina. As the women tell of furtive sex in overcrowded apartments, romantic weekends on the Black Sea and public couplings in labour camps, if any one of them is an outsider it is Galina with her high-minded lack of passion.

Voznesenskaya's language is appropriately plithy and colloquial. The English translation of this book, which has appeared in Russian only in the West, drops some words and uses dated slang, but otherwise it races along.

All is richly well in the end: the tenth night given over to distilled happiness. The women compare themselves with Western women, and consider our lives dull and inferior.

And Emma said: You see what a happy life we have in this country, Galina? We manage to get something special and it makes us happy on the days. And you're always grumbling at the moment. Do you think women in the West have any concept of the joys of life? "Yes, they don't experience our love," laughed Galina. "I wish we didn't have to either."

## The pull of death

Neil Corcoran

AMY CLAMPITT  
What the Light Was Like  
110pp. Faber. Paperhack, £4.  
0571 138144

Amy Clampitt's new book is exceptionally long for a single volume of poems, and it is divided into separately titled sections complemented by a fairly lengthy section of notes. In all of these ways, it resembles the American edition of her last book, *The Kingfisher* (Knopf, 1982), from which the English, Faber edition – widely acclaimed here on its publication in 1984 – was a fairly rigorous selection which cut down the number of poems from fifty to thirty-two and dispensed with the section titles and the notes. While this undoubtedly made Clampitt seem more uniformly successful, it also perhaps made her seem more uniform. In particular, the social and public concerns of the entirely excluded final section, even if they did seem a little *voulu*, lent ballast to a volume which, in its English edition, may have been thought by some too comfortably self-delighting. The notes were also genuinely illuminating, informative about Clampitt's botanical and anthropological sources and more clearly manifesting some native American influences – Charles Olson as well as the more obvious Marianne Moore.

The new book, identical with its American edition, gives us, then, a rather more complicated picture of this extraordinary, late-flowering, suddenly prolific talent. There are poems of public terror and urban blight, and there is a long sequence, "Voyagers", meditating on Keats. There are poems circling around Clampitt's American pioneer family background, a theme relating her to some other interesting contemporary American writing still too little known here: some of Robert Hass's poetry, for instance, and James McMichael's excellent long poem, "Itinerary". And there is, persistently, the presence of one of the oldest of all American preoccupations, which the book's opening poem names explicitly when it discovers an Eastern seaboard and apparently quoting Michelangelo and Crivelli:

### Tusking.

In Africa once  
A herd of Harrow  
Elephants strayed  
Far from their hunks;  
Leather, they lay  
Their costly trunks  
And ears of felt  
Down on the veldt.

All forgot  
The creep of dusk:  
A moonbeam stole  
Along each task;  
Snored and sighs.  
Oh foolish boys!  
The English Elephant  
Never lies!

In the night-time, lithe  
Shadows with little  
Glinting teeth  
Whisked tusks away;  
Drew through the dark  
Branches of Ivory  
Made a great hue  
On their rapid run.

Hunters, at home  
They curl up the bare  
Soles of their feet  
With piano-pleasure;  
Sammy plays  
A massacre song.  
With the notes wrong  
On Massa's baby.

you might suppose  
the coast of Maine had Europe  
on the brain or in its bones, as though  
it were a kind of sickness.

The varied concerns, however, are addressed in a manner entirely continuous with that of *The Kingfisher*. The trampling exact descriptions inhabit a poetic line that is crossingly responsive to the object of its attention, and the descriptions slip gracefully into the revelation of some kind of morality. This absorbed descriptiveness can become self-satisfied or pretentiously elaborate, a cosy and even preposterous version of what one of her poems calls the "outdoorsy-domestic". What the *Light Was Like*, however – and it is a real advance – is more chastely restrained than *The Kingfisher*, in which several poems were vitiated by an exasperating and cloying lushness, a New Yorker-glossy imagery in which the carcase became an embarrassing cuddle. Certainly there is nothing in the new book remotely like the *Kingfisher* fog "discovering" what had been wavering / fishnet plissé as a smoothness / of peau-de-sole or just-ironed percale.

This restraint is intimately connected with the new book's preoccupation with death. Two of the finest poems in *The Kingfisher* were meditations on death, "Beethoven, Opus 111", on the poet's father's death, and "A Procession at Candlemas", which, if I have read its complexities properly, was provoked by the death of her mother. The sharpening and oppositional pull of the deathly is more pervasive in *What the Light Was Like*. It is dedicated to the memory of her brother, who died in 1981, and it contains two elegies for him: one of them, "Urn-Burial and the Butterfly Migration", is one of the best poems in the book, an intricate, finely tuned piece which tenderly yokes its heterogeneous ideas together to make its inquiry of death. "Voyagers" has at its centre not only the brevity of Keats's life, but also his brother Tom's death, and it memorializes in its final poem both Hart Crane's suicide and Osip Mandelstam's unknown end in Stalinist Russia. And the book's marvellous and haunting little poem concerns the death of a Maine lobsterman. "What the Light Was Like" is entirely characteristic of Amy Clampitt's obliquely empathetic but always alert, sen-

suous manner, when it holds in poise with the lonely death at sea a sense of what will always persist in the world, beyond any individual death:

I find it  
tempting to imagine what,  
when the blood roared, overflowing its cerebral  
staircase,  
and the lighthouse  
of his last perception, charring, gave way to unre-  
versed,

Irrevocable dark,  
the light on there was like, that's always shifting –  
from  
a nimbus gone berserk  
to a single forget, a cathedral train of blinking, or  
the fogbound shroud

that can turn anywhere into a nowhere. But it's  
useless.

Tha death triumphs, of course: at the end of the poem, the hummingbird splendidly present at its beginning falls to return to the lobsterman's habitat; but this discriminating relish of the light acts as a kind of reassurance, in the very effort, however doomed to failure, of the poetic imagination to subsume the death in its transforming metaphors. Elsewhere in the volume, individual poems do climax in moments of some kind of secular grace or benediction. These are all, as the book's final poem, "Let the Air Circulate", has it, "beatitudes of the unaware they're being looked at".

That poem experiments with layout somewhat in the way of Herbert's "Easter Wings", or some poems of Dylan Thomas or Apollinaire: the stanzas are shaped to allow the "air" of the page's white space to "circulate" through them. This typography dramatizes a sense of the poem itself as what Clampitt calls the snow in "A Curfew", "a seeming flux / of strict constructions". The seeming flux of her work – its lucid, flowing syntax, with all those parentheses loading every rift with ore, and its pellucid imagery – gives it an immediate surface attractiveness; but it is its strictnesses, too, in poems whose complex mergings and dissolvings of image into image and of experience into experience need patient, repeated reading, and whose subjects are frequently, in one way or another, "the stigma / of the dispossessed, the razed, / the iriste, the unaccounted-for". This strict flux may be thought the essence of Amy Clampitt's aesthetic, and it is perhaps given its fitting emblem in the poem "Gooseberry Fool". The final stanza there proposes a culinary morality – both tart and sweet, constructing its celebrations from sadness, diminishment and loss – which, with unforced aliveness, makes the transformations of its recipe into a little *Tempest*:

Ever since,  
four summers ago, I brought you,  
a gleeful Ariel, the trophy  
of a small sour handout,  
I've wondered what not quite articulated thing  
could render magical  
the green globe of oo usirpe berry.  
I think now it was simply  
the great globe itself too much to carry.

## Dailiness

Sean O'Brien

J. P. WARD  
The Clearing  
64pp. Bridgehead: Poetry Wales Press. £3.50.  
0907476341

J. P. Ward makes use of a Welsh setting, and seems at home with dailiness: through the commonplace he approaches the limits of knowledge at which his self-effacing but frankly romantic reverence begins. Family, home, garden, journeys to and from them, prompt his careful presentation of the senses' luxuries. In "Midsummer Night, Late Evening"

We don't know what to say, we seem  
Whereas night people in a dream  
Of someone else's, dreaming of  
and mixing night with daybreak.

When Ward seeks to comment on his wonderment, his reasonableness lacks the arrogance needed to rephrase a familiar cosmology; but "A Memorable Swim" and the enigmatic close of "Village Wedding", where relatives are seen "trailing the black grapes as they leave", evoke more by explaining less.

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# Hell and hard work

David Seideman

PAUL BOYER  
By the Bomb's Early Light  
440pp. New York: Pantheon. \$22.50.  
ROY JENKINS  
Truman  
230pp. Collins. £12.95.  
0002175843

In August 1945, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a leading scientist involved in the weapon's development told Harry Truman that some of his colleagues believed they had blood on their hands. The President scornfully held out a handkerchief. "Well, here," he asked, "would you like to wipe off your hands?"

Americans reacted to the atomic bomb with mixed emotions. Anxiety about the devastation dampened the relief they felt about avoiding the carnage of a protracted war with Japan. Some wondered whether the victory justified permanently poisoning the "nuclear sword of Damocles" (John Kennedy's later term) over the world. In *By the Bomb's Early Light*, Paul Boyer, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, traces the immediate effects of the bomb on American thought and culture from its initial release until 1950. Throughout this period, Boyer maintains, "anguish" resonated throughout the national "consciousness".

Boyer culls evidence from a wide variety of sources to explore American acceptance of the bomb. The tawdry apparatus of commercialization exploited natural wonder at a technological marvel. In 1946 the General Mills Corporation offered an "Atomic Bomb Ring" in return for fifteen cents and one Kix cereal box-top; nearly a million youngsters inundated the company with orders. Local bars sold the "Atomic Cocktail", a noxious concoction of Pernod and gin. One of Boyer's many arresting photographs shows a Vice Admiral and his wife at a Washington party cutting a large cake in the shape of a mushroom cloud.

The government subsequently launched a "paracordizing" campaign to sell the atom in peacetime as a benign servant of the public good, which promised to heat homes and power cars. One exuberant propheet catalogued fantastic products it might lead to, from atomic toothpaste to vitamin tablets. Meanwhile, on a larger and graver scale, the military viewed the bomb as a godsend. Besides delivering soldiers from death in Japan, it tilted the equilibrium between the two superpowers decidedly in America's favour. Of course, the military euphoria was short-lived. In 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its own device, triggering a full-scale arms race and the now familiar Cold War tension, which meant that the West had to build bigger and better bombs as a bulwark against communism.

Still, American response to the bomb was not entirely enthusiastic. Its cataclysmic potential immediately filled millions with dread. Intellectuals and activists spoke out. "There are no longer problems of the spirit," William Faulkner declared in his 1950 Nobel Prize address. "There is only this question: When will it be blown up?" Boyer's comprehensive survey of contemporary doomsday literature (such as David Bradley's classic *No Place to Hide*) reveals a distracted culture. The popularity of a literary genre that played on readers' morbid fascination with broiled human bodies and vaporized cities overwhelmed the social commentator Norman Cousins with "primordial apprehensions". The political responses of the anxious centred on impractical schemes for world government and international disarmament. Either restrain the "atomic Frankenstein", their adherents warned, or brace yourself for the horrifying end.

Boyer, too, seems to fear for his life. He cautions Americans to avoid being lulled into the "Big Sleep" of political apathy and cultural neglect that he primarily links "with the complexity and comfort of the deterrence theory". For "unpredictable human factors", he concludes, could "propel us down the road to holocaust" and "toward a catastrophic denouement". Boyer summons local activists, students, church groups, and concerned citizens not to mention

"the supreme menace of our age". But his noble aspirations founder, alas, on the fundamental premises of the nuclear age. It does not suffice merely to "amplify awareness" about this predicament. Deterrence, with all its frightening imponderables, may indeed be all that is possible for a world in which so much physical and technological knowledge is forever available. It may also be responsible for the past forty years of peace. Until anyone proposes a viable alternative, it will certainly remain a fact of life. Indeed, as a historian, Boyer should be the first to admit that "driving back the shadow of global death" will demand something more than the evocation of apocalyptic nightmares.

Harry Truman presided over the nation's first nuclear arsenal with surprising equanimity. Thrust into office on Franklin Roosevelt's untimely death in April 1945, the little-known sixty-year-old Vice President was wearily ill-prepared to enter the White House. Roosevelt had kept his underling in his place – and in the dark about the "Manhattan Project". Nor did this Missouri provincial look or act like a President. "He had none of his [predecessor's] style, none of his prestige," writes Roy Jenkins. But Truman, operating by sheer instinct, plunged ahead with the daunting task of creating "the Western world as it still broadly exists today". In his briskly paced and absorbing account, Jenkins portrays Truman as an American original.

From the start, he struggled to overcome serious limitations. Descended from pioneer stock, his father was a horse trader. As a county judge he gradually rose through the muck of local Missouri politics and gained a seat in the Senate in 1935. Nine years later he surfaced as Roosevelt's dark-horse running mate. While in Washington, Truman felt more at ease playing poker and drinking bourbon with cronies than

discussing matters of state. Colleagues called him the "contrarist Missouri Mule" and blanched at his profanity and earthy demeanour. On hearing the news of the bomb's success in Japan, he wept and hollered aboard a battleship. This behaviour displayed, Jenkins admonishes, "an inappropriate lack of solemnity and sensitivity". In 1945 Truman's trip to Potsdam was his first abroad since the First World War. "I've got to lunch with the limey King", he wrote to his wife Bess. Truman's wide reading in history barely concealed a weak grasp of economics and foreign policy. He appeared to go out of his way to offend members of Congress. "He was a jejune little man who had very little idea of what he was doing", Jenkins writes of his early years.

Yet Truman grew into the job, and Jenkins's extensive summaries of international events form the book's background. Truman accelerated European recovery with the monumental Marshall Plan, and had a large hand in the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His "excessive appetite for rapid decision-making" deserves Jenkins's accolades. Truman also showed a keen sense of character, appointing two brilliant Secretaries of State, George Marshall and Dean Acheson, and asking the insubordinate, yet enormously popular, General Douglas MacArthur for subverting a cease-fire prelude to the Korean war. Jenkins praises the dismissal as "an act of stark courage". "I doubt", he adds, "if Franklin Roosevelt would have done it."

Based mainly on the work of previous biographers, Jenkins's study adds little new knowledge to his subject. Still, the author's elegant style and idiosyncratic observations make it worthwhile. Who else would have been irritated that Truman came to "adore" Winston Churchill instead of the like-minded Attlee? Jenkins tells a new story of Truman

and Attlee singing First World War songs together while discussing whether to drop the bomb on North Korea in 1950. A relaxed President thought better of the idea.

But Jenkins's shift from diplomacy to domestic American history puts him on shakier ground. He refers to McCarthyism as "McCarthyite populism", but populism denotes a widespread grass-roots movement; in fact, Washington's clesed society essentially fostered McCarthyism, though many Americans condoned it. The capital's Cold War paranoia stiffened Congress's resolve to fight communism at home through repressive measures, including harsh sedition laws for suspected subversives (passed over Truman's veto). Furthermore, Jenkins does not fully appreciate the actual constraints on Truman's presidency. "The American democracy has many qualities, but appreciating great presidents during their terms of office is not amongst them", he writes. Contrary to this austere generalization, those mentions – Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt – won re-election by substantial majorities.

Truman achieved the distinction of being both highly esteemed and angrily reviled, depending on the month of the year. The fluctuations in his ratings stemmed in part from Americans' traditional image of the presidential office. Their respect for his majesty tempered their enthusiasm for Truman's "rough stuff", as use Jenkins's phrase. He could never cut a larger-than-life figure, and, bumbled by his limitations, he revered Churchillian grandeur. In 1953 his home-town celebrated the end of his White House tenure and return to Missouri with a large rally. "Mrs T said I were over me", he wrote in his diary. "It was the pay-off for thirty years of hell and hard work." To the end, Truman remained an average man with an outstanding record of accomplishment.

presence of a Radical Liberal with Whiggish leanings, proud that the People's Charter of 1837 has largely been enacted but opposed to any further tinkering with the structure or convocations of political power. Foot's commitment to "Socialism", defined as anything of which Bevan would have approved, is real, but subordinate to this central instinct.

Political commentary, though, his talent wonderfully destructive. Who could read without pleasure the account of Dr Owen's poor little hook, whose "whole idea was to erect fudge and mudge into a new literary form", even if the author of these very words had not spent some years trying to erect the same thing into a new political philosophy? And who would fail to recognize George Brown's "prancing egotism", or deny of Winston Churchill that "philosophy, economics, industrial organization, social realities, the struggle of classes, history itself as anything more than a tale of blood and thunder were beyond his intellectual reach"? This is a book to be read for its phrases, and for the warmth of its portraits of nineteenth-century heroes (and Jenny Lee), not for an extended coherent argument about anything. The skills that forty years ago endeared Michael Foot to Labour Beaverbrook and produced *Gully Men* have not deserted him. Systematic thought about uncomfortable facts is, admittedly, a faculty which he has yet to develop in full, but there is surely still time.

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

Gustav Mayer: Professor of History in Berlin, 1922-33, and biographer of Friedrich Engels; any letters, personal memories or information about his life and work during his exile in Great Britain after 1934; for a biographical study, Outfield, Richard.

Stephen Graham: (1884-1975), writer on Russia; whereabouts of his papers and library; identity of his literary executor.

Richard Davies: Archive, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

papers, photographs etc relating to the League and its contribution to the movement for reform in Ireland, 1881-2; for a history of the League, Jane Cole.

George Gascoigne: present location of the copy of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* once owned by the Elizabethan poet George Gascoigne (Gascoigne's edition, in a copy issued by Venetian, 1553); formerly (1942) in the possession of Leon Mandel of Chicago.

Germaine Warkentin: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria University, Toronto, Ontario M8V 1C8, Canada.

# Rattling the bag

Conor Cruise O'Brien

JOSEPH LELYVELD  
Mere Year Shadow: South Africa black and white  
390pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.  
0718126610

Joseph Lelyveld's title is taken from a Fanagalo phrase-book, Fanagalo being a *lingua franca* used by South African whites to communicate with black menials (and vice versa, *mutatis mutandis*). The words which provide the title are taken from the section of the phrase-book designed to be of use to golfers. The context runs:

You must be quiet when my partner plays a shot. Be quiet. If you lose another ball, there will be no tip for you. Move your shadow. Don't rattle the bag.

Lelyveld was South African correspondent of the *New York Times* for two spells, separated by fourteen years. The first spell was of eleven months (1965-6) and ended in April 1966, with expulsion from South Africa. The Afrikaans press at the time crowed that he had been *wingshot*, thus presenting him with the title for his first chapter, "Out-Kicked". The second spell was of three years, beginning in 1980.

The decision to readmit the expelled correspondent was presumably related to Pretoria's aspiration, from the late 1970s on, to acquire a more liberal image. As so often happens, the "liberalizers" didn't do themselves much good. The out-kicked didn't come back to South Africa with any better dispositions towards the apartheid system than he had before he was out-kicked. He altogether refused to buy the notion that the "liberal wing" of the Nationale Party was (and is) most anxious to sell: that, as a result of the reforms introduced by P. W. Botha, apartheid is dead; or, if not quite dead, then soon about to die, as a result of further reforms about to be introduced by P. W.

Betha. On "progress out of apartheid", Lelyveld writes as follows:

For whites the contradictions can be taken as an expression of the country's undeniable vitality. For blacks they are only relatively less humiliating than the old, straightforward style of apartheid. Blacks are still ghettoized in their townships. Even if portions of these are being upgraded for a small, emergent middle class, they are nearly always set off by buffer zones – highways, railway yards, factories, mining dumps – in a manner that plainly reflects meticulous preparation for a military siege. South Africa never achieved the absurdity of segregated flights on its airline, but the trains and buses, the services the mass of blacks require, are still demarcated by race. Legitimate theaters, which blacks are unlikely to attend in large numbers, have been allowed to desegregate. But movie theaters outside the townships are still for whites only, although an official commission has raised the possibility of desegregating some of them. Swimming pools at "international" hotels are supposed to be open to blacks and other nonwhites, but beaches remain segregated. Restaurants are a matter of guesswork. Where a "Right of Admission Reserved" sign is displayed, the guess is not difficult. Most are for whites only, but some allow whites to take blacks; a handful allow blacks to take themselves. It is this crazy-quilt pattern of deviousness, manipulation, and control that whites call progress. Some blacks allow themselves to share the illusion for minutes at a time, but most know it for what it is. They call it apartheid.

As can be seen, Lelyveld writes well. He also has a good reporter's eye and nose and is fascinated by the manifold contradictions, deceptions and surprises of South African society today (well not quite today, but I'll come to that in a moment). Although the passage I have quoted is an excellent piece of analysis, the main strength of *Mere Year Shadow* lies not so much in analysis as in enlightenment through stories (in the journalistic sense). Lelyveld is attracted to eddies, which then turn out to be instructive about terms. Take the case of the Zulu author and seer, Crede Vasamasulu Mutwa.

Mutwa is the author of two books, *Indaba, My Children and Africa Is My Witness*. As Lelyveld tells us in a footnote, these works were excerpted in a collection published in

London under the title *My People: The incredible writings of a Zulu witch-doctor*; the same collection was published in the United States as *My People, My Africa*. These writings are about traditional Africa, as distinct from the world of the black Westernized élites. Lelyveld acknowledges that there is much of interest to be explored there. But he suspected that Mutwa was not so much exploring it as telling the white masters what they want to hear about it. What they want to hear, from blacks, is not necessarily what they themselves – in the days of the Biko reforms – like to be heard saying. The masters may say that apartheid is dead, or dying, but Mutwa writes: "Apartheid is a law of nature. Apartheid is what we want and need." Traditional Africa, according to this Shaman, needs apartheid for the protection of its own mysterious essence. The African needs to be left "at peace in his kraal". (Apartheid, in practice, has never left Africans at peace in their kraals, but Mutwa seems more interested in the theory of the thing.)

Mutwahimself, far from living at peace in his kraal, has been living in Soweto in fear of his life. Lelyveld sought him out there. First, Lelyveld visited the shrine which Mutwa, with the approval of the West Rand Administration Board, set up in Soweto, and which was inched as "the major cultural attraction" in official guided bus-tours through the township. Lelyveld provides a memorable description of Mutwa's shrine:

Rising up, I continued on, entering the precincts of a shrine that seemed to derive its inspiration partly from the cult of the avenging Hindu goddess Kali and partly from Disney World. Ostensibly it was an African kraal, but the roofs of the whitewashed round huts bristled with religious symbols that were not primarily associated with Africa, including the Muslim crescent moon and the Hindu swastika. In open spaces between the huts, outside, crudely formed sculptures, molded in cement and covered with plaster, looked as if they were meant to embody the iconography of schizophrenia. Painted in Day-Glo colors that mostly struck the eye as bilious rather than lustrous, this pantheon included a dinosaur, a tiger, a green earth mother with the heft of an ox, a

Martian or other extraterrestrial visitor with an over-extended brow of an orange hue, and a mechanical figure that may only have appeared to have been inspired by the Tin Woodman of Oz.

Lelyveld discovered that Mutwa was an employee of the Soweto Parks and Recreation Department and lived in "a tiny brick shed", behind a high security fence, in one of the Department's compounds. (His original home had been fire-bombed after he had given evidence to a commission of inquiry into the Soweto riots of 1976.) "He runs a facility for us", a Department official told Lelyveld. The receipts of the facility, which were considerable, and derived exclusively from tourists, went to the Department, not to Mutwa, who understandably felt cheated, as he made clear to Lelyveld. Mutwa's shrine/facility may stand as an analogue of the apartheid system in its "version of pastoral", "protecting-native-culture" aspect.

*Mere Year Shadow* contains a great deal that is instructive in an out-of-the-way fashion, like the story of Mutwa. But the reader should be aware that this is not exactly a book about South Africa today. It is a book about South Africa as it appeared to a highly competent reporter, in the period 1980-83: the period, that is, immediately preceding "the unrest" – as South Africans call it – which set in in September 1983, continued throughout 1984, became far more violent in 1985, and continues in 1986, though apparently at somewhat reduced intensity just now. *Mere Year Shadow* reflects the world that existed before all that. Some of its generalizations are no longer applicable, and the "atmosphere" of those days – which pervades the whole book – is not the atmosphere of 1985-6. Tourists would be unlikely to queue up, today, for a guided bus-tour of Soweto.

Writing of his return to South Africa in 1980, Lelyveld says: "white power seemed more entrenched and happy with itself, with its own devices and cleverness, than ever". In its context – that of a contrast between 1980 and

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1965-6 - I am sure that was correct. But the reader of *Move Your Shadow* might easily be left with the impression that "white power" still feels like that, which is not so. Throughout his book, Lelyveld presents a picture of a white South Africa which is ruthless and devious, but very much in command of events. "The security police", he writes, "have effectively orchestrated black politics, mainly through repression but also through a selective lifting of the throttles and atops."

But the chief development of the last two-and-a-half years in the townships has been the loss by the security police of the power to orchestrate black politics in the townships. The black politicians who were orchestrated have been killed off, or frightened off, or are living under direct police protection and so politically nullified. On the edges of the townships, and containing them, police power is effective. But inside the townships the police are no longer in control. Throughout 1985, most political authority, inside the township, was in the hands of those who were known as "the children". In general the children were those attending - or, in 1985, often boycotting - schools: those aged from eight to twenty-four. In its political application "the children" meant the militant leadership within that age-group: tough ruthless young men enforcing their political will by terror. Anyone suspected of being a police agent, or found guilty of disobeying a political directive, was put to death, on the streets or in their home, or elsewhere. In November 1985, a nurse was burned alive, in the main hospital in Soweto, for "strike-breaking".

By early 1986, the authority of "the children" - or at least of the most ferocious among them - seemed to be slipping a bit. But that did not mean a return of white-orchestrated politicians. The terror of "the children" had already done its work in that respect: the police had lost its eyes and ears in the townships. The balance might have swung back a little in favour of the elders, but elders and children alike rejected the whole apartheid system. And most of them, old or young, openly supported the African National Congress.

Nor were the whites anything like as confident, after the impact of "the unrest", as you might think from *Move Your Shadow*. Whites have been deeply shaken by the consequences of "the unrest", especially its economic and

financial consequences, including the catastrophic decline in the value of the rand.

Even the expression "white power", which Lelyveld uses a lot, is no longer a dependable phrase. Many English-speaking whites feel utterly powerless today. It is true that they have not enjoyed any political power, since 1948. But up to 1983, the loss of political power did not seem, to many English-speakers, all that important. English-speakers had most of the economic power, and of the social status, and they were, by and large, content to leave to the Afrikaners the responsibility (and the odium) of maintaining the privileges common to all whites.

Some English-speakers began to get a little worried about all that, after the Soweto "school-riots" of 1976, and many more became much more worried as "the unrest" developed from 1983, hitting the economy hard, and deepening South Africa's international isolation. One English-speaking woman, in conversation with me in October 1985, compared the position of English-speakers, under Afrikaner rule, to that of passengers in a train, who know that the driver is drunk.

The figure is striking, but the driver - P. W. Botha or another - is not drunk. It is just that the interests of the two white communities, as perceived by themselves, have become increasingly divergent. The leaders of the business community - mostly English-speakers and representatives of English-speaking opinion - would like to do a deal with the ANC, as they showed by their trip to Lusaka last year. They know that such a deal cannot be attained, except by a surrender of the "white" monopoly of power. But the monopoly they are prepared to surrender is not really their monopoly at all. That monopoly has been an Afrikaner property, since 1948.

To many - not all - English-speakers, the idea of sharing political power with blacks is not so very frightening, especially as English-speakers don't have any political power as it is. But to Afrikaners, who actually have the power in question, the idea of losing it is very frightening indeed. After a transit of power, the English-speakers, being in the private sector, could hope to get along reasonably well - as in Zimbabwe - and probably with better prospects than they have now, as disgruntled inmates of an Afrikaner-controlled laager under increasing attack.

The Afrikaners, on the other hand, would sustain all the direct losses in the event of a transit of political power, since the political domain and the public sector as a whole are theirs. They have not only their permanent majority in Parliament, but the whole civil service, from top to bottom. D. F. Malan, in the years after 1948, fully Afrikanerized the civil service, through skilfully applied measures of "bilingualization". And Afrikaners today know that blacks, as soon as they acquired political power, would set about Africanizing everything which had formally been Afrikanerized. As a consequence, many Afrikaners, especially in the lower echelons of the public sector, would find themselves out of jobs, without skills that are in demand in the private sector. They and their families might go back to the level of "poor whites": which had been the condition of many of them in the first half of the century.

That is the kind of thing that Afrikaners have to fear from a transit of power; their rejection of that is not irrational; the "driver" is not "drunk". And the Afrikaner-dominated armed forces appear to reject the idea of negotiations, with the ANC even more firmly than the politicians and the Afrikaner electorate do. (The small Afrikaner intellectual élite is disposed to agree with the English-speakers. But like the English-speakers, it is politically

powerless.)

P. W. Botha's speech at the opening of Parliament, at the end of January, was conciliatory in language, as it was in the deployment of concepts that have an egalitarian ring to them, like "citizenship" for everybody. But the only "citizenship" that will count will continue to be citizenship in the white community, in which Afrikaners, having a majority of 60 per cent, have their base for permanent power. Increasingly large numbers of young political blacks - in a rapidly expanding black majority - will refuse to accept that. "The unrest" will not go away and the security forces are likely to meet it with increasingly fierce repression; so fierce, in my opinion, as eventually to precipitate external intervention, which the United States will ultimately and most reluctantly have to support, as the least of three evils. The two worse ones would be to leave the Soviet Union and its proxies to do the job; or to appear as the protector of South Africa, by saying "Hush off!" to the Russians.

However that may be, South Africa will continue, in 1986 and after, to be one of the most interesting places to be, for a good reporter. So I hope Joseph Lelyveld will be able to go back. But I think he would be wise, next time, to get his book out a bit faster, once he has completed his tour of duty.

## Instruments of change

Stanley Uys

FREDERIK VAN ZYL SLABBERT  
*The Last White Parliament*  
175pp. Slagwicks and Jackson. £10.95.  
0283 993499  
ANTHONY VERRIER  
*The Road to Zimbabwe 1890-1980*  
364pp. Cape. £16.  
0224 021613

The timing of Frederik van Zyl Slabbert's book, *The Last White Parliament*, is unfortunate. Not only is he no longer leader of the opposition in South Africa's white-only House of Assembly, as the front cover says he is (he walked out on February 7, denouncing parliament as a "charade"), but he makes a spirited defence in the book of "engaging the system".

The question for me has ever been whether we are part of "the system" or not, but what we are prepared to do about it. . . . That is why I have no difficulty trying to explain why I am to parliament and what I am trying to do and why I am encouraging others to do the same.

Slabbert - an Afrikaner from the northern Transvaal "backveld", who originally planned to become a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church - was a reluctant politician from the start. When he was being wooed by the Progressive Federal Party to stand, a friend told him that "the just could not see me as a politician in white politics and the more he explained why, the more I had to agree with him". Nevertheless Slabbert stood for parliament, and as an MP stuck it out for twelve years, seven as PFP leader, working indefatigably and seeing the party grow in parliamentary strength; and then he packed it in, abruptly and without warning, and in a way that, according to some of his former colleagues, inflicted the maximum damage on the party.

It is an uneven, somewhat pedestrian book, ranging from the intensely personal (on the first page he confides that his mother was an alcoholic) to the weighty political. The tale Slabbert tells of how he found his liberal beliefs - first by witnessing brutality against blacks, then through religious conversion and a traumatic rebuff when he went into a black township to do missionary work, and finally through establishing personal contact with blacks - is both sad and moving. Slabbert's honesty comes across as an endearing quality. But always the restlessness, the ambivalence, are there.

"The last white parliament", of course, is the pre-1984 one, which consisted solely of the House of Assembly. In 1984 two new chambers were added, one for Coloureds and one for Indians (but not one for Africans). Slabbert no

longer thinks that the new tricameral parliament can be used as an instrument to bring about one constitution for all South Africa, based on one citizenship free of statutory discrimination and racial domination of the other hand, he also rejects violence as an instrument of change. It would be interesting to know where he thinks the middle ground lies.

Anthony Verrier's excellent book, *The Road to Zimbabwe 1890-1980* - which describes the attainment by South Africa's northern neighbour of the kind of polity widely envisaged by van Zyl Slabbert - is certainly going to put the cat among the pigeons. Labour supporters, for example, will be affronted by Verrier's claim that it is a myth that Labour governments between 1945 and 1951 were committed to "de-colonization", to "a new deal for native races everywhere".

Conservative government circles are likely to be even more upset by Verrier's version of what happened in Zimbabwe, particularly during the ZANU/ZAPU war against the Smith régime, at the Lancaster House conference, and during the ceasefire and run-up to the independence elections. Verrier accuses the Foreign Office of skulduggery, of scheming and plotting to keep the Patriotic Front out of power. But, he adds, Mugabe "won against the odds which a British government and Southern Rhodesia's whites could lay against him".

The author's judgment on Mrs Thatcher is harsh. She went to the Commonwealth Conference in Lusaka in 1979 aware of the opposition to her policies, but

only after three days of the most intense pressure did she capitulate to a scarcely veiled threat that, if the Majesty's Government granted recognition to "Zimbabwe-Rhodesia", Britain would be expelled from the Commonwealth. The carefully staged public relations campaign after the meeting by the Thatcher's Private Office to the effect that it was her initiatives which prevented deadlock on Rhodesia was moulted in order to camouflage the fact of the capitulation.

Verrier is much kinder to Thatcher's successor, Foreign Secretary. Although Lord Carrington was "determined to back Mugabe", he was "not faltered in his assessment of what had to be done; at Lusaka, and thereafter, Mugabe was due, therefore, to his 'courage and determination', and he and Mugabe respected each other". "One essentially honest, clear-sighted man to another". But even Carrington, as Verrier tells the story, was drawn into the scheming and duplicity, particularly over the ceasefire issue.

Anthony Verrier tells a murky story which no doubt Mugabe will corroborate, but which will cause many hackles to rise among the whites who served the Foreign Office during the historic change-over from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

## The impotence of being earnest

Peter Clarke

MAURICE COWLING  
*Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*  
Volume Two: Assaults  
375pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.  
0521 259592

As a historian with twenty-five years of intensely productive authorship behind him, Maurice Cowling has firmly established his corner; he has fought it and held it; and his achievement in writing himself into it becomes more undeniable with each new book. Not that these are of one genre. Superficially at least, the oeuvre falls into three distinct periods. In the first came works which could fairly readily be classified under political science. Then came the surprises.

For the second period saw an abrupt shift of focus from theory to action in politics, not by postulating or specifying the presumed links between them but apparently by ignoring them. In place of close exegesis from texts like Mill's *On Liberty*, there was an equally detailed analysis of discrete political crises, as refracted through the private correspondence of leading politicians. This was the map of "high politics", where personal ambition and tactical advantage constituted their own field of force, governing the behaviour of party leaders in responding not only to each other but also, in an essentially derivative and instrumental way, to the issues of the day, whose "impact" upon politics was always problematical if not contingent. Thus was the Second Reform Act passed in 1867; thus did the party system adapt to the incursion of the Labour Party in the early 1920s; thus was appeasement matched up or tossed aside in the late 1930s. In the world of the eponymous Cowlingites, MacLennan would have been remarkable only for his embarrassingly naive civic republican sentiments.

Such insights quickly passed into the common stock of academic wisdom about modern British politics. No historian now dares set pen to paper without at least an anxious glance over his shoulder and some anticipation of the sharp deflationary retort, *cul bono?* The methodology of "high politics" has in this way provided

the salt in our porridge, the lemon in our gin and tonic; and, as with these good things, a little goes a long way. There are, to be sure, those true believers who defer to the "Cambridge school" by bowing frequently towards the east; but even in Cambridge the sect only really took root in its native Peterhouse, the smallest and most introverted of the older undergraduate colleges.

This minor topographical point is of some significance in appreciating the writings of Cowling's latest period. Just when the impact of high politics had been absorbed, it turned out that a further Peterhouse revolution (or counter-revolution) was in prospect. Instead of resuming his heroic labours in the archives of recent British politicians, Cowling, like Churchill before him, chose to offer a slice of autobiography dressed up as universal history. In the first volume of *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England* (reviewed in the TLS on February 6, 1981), the author assessed his intellectual debts in a mood of assertive and self-proclaimed reactionary bitterness - "a Jacobinism of the mind". It was a difficult work to read, in any sense of that word, but one which was imbued with a peculiar flavour and dedicated to a distinctive end. With the publication of Volume Two, the idiosyncrasies have become slightly less pervasive and the meaning slightly less opaque.

In Cowling's middle period, it often seemed that nothing in the world really matters because cynicism unlocks every door. With the latest twist, it now seems that it is only in the world that nothing really matters since religion, with its eschatological promise, is what merits serious consideration. As Volume One put it, "in face of the transcendence of God, no moral or political system has any authority, and more or less anything will do".

Whereas "high politics" could be accused of reducing all explanation to the facts of the situation in which action occurred, the new methodology is open to the charge that it ignores context altogether. What we have in this volume is a series of accounts of the ideas of some forty men (and one woman with a man's name). They are sharp, bright, terse, allusive, condensed and contracted, and almost always at a fairly high level of abstraction. The author admits that it is "not . . . a very fleshly history", but his plea that "there is

not a very fleshly history to relate" seems to adopt an unduly restrictive view. This sometimes reads like the history of thought without thinkers, of propositions without debates, and of controversies without assailants.

This may well seem an odd feature of a book which is subtitled "Assaults". Part One deals with the assault on the eighteenth century - the reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment which the author identifies initially with Tractarianism. Thus H. J. Rose, Hurrell Froude, W. G. Ward, Newman, Keble, Pusey, Liddon, Mansel, Gladstone and Manning hog most of the space (though there is also room for a chapter on Ruskin and Protestantism). With Part Two, the assault on Christianity begins. In the hands of Mill, Buckle, G. H. Lewes, George Eliot, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Leslie Stephen, Morley, Harrison and W. W. Reade, it is characterized by the various dimensions of "ethical earnestness" which it manifested. Using the obvious mid-Victorian tools of science and historical scholarship, these were the thinkers who dismantled the traditional structure of Christian belief.

Along with a fully human Christ and a repudiation of the unique claims of revealed Christianity there persisted none the less an "expectation that Christian morality could be retained without Christian theology and that naturalistic or subjective sanctions for morality could be made available once supernatural sanctions had been abandoned". From this perspective, the author is not satisfied with the view "that these thinkers were enemies of revealed, credal and ecclesiastical Christianity only", since their appropriation of the fruit of the tree consorted with a determination to cut its roots. Though Spencer claimed to treat religion with respect, even though no one religion was "actually true", Cowling shrewdly concludes that such a position "has really to be understood as a subtle way of crowding historic Christianity, while, being amiably condescending towards it".

Part Three deals with twentieth-century revisions of this sort of ethical earnestness. In face of the perceived inadequacy of a starkly rationalist alternative to Christianity: Gilbert Murray, Frazer, Taylor, Wells, Shaw, Havelock Ellis, Somerset Maugham, D. H. Lawrence and Russell are taken as representative of the new "pessimistic illusionlessness", better sus-

tained by some of them than others. Finally, Part Four examines some attempts at a Christian counter-revolution - Patmore, Mallock, Chesterton, Belloc, Greene, Christopher Dawson, F. C. Copleston.

The book is enlivened throughout by vivid passages which show a real engagement with the subject, not least in the twentieth-century sections. Lawrence comes to life because, almost uniquely, he is fleshed out in three dimensions with laconic but well-observed detail of his career. Mallock's anti-egalitarian arguments are likewise infused with both passion and logic in the exposition - a wholly successful rescue of an unwarrantably neglected figure. Why, then, does the feeling of conviction flag in other places? By the time he reaches his conclusion, the author's jejune remarks on his variegated cast-list - "Many published fifty books, some more than a hundred" - betray a discernible weariness.

How did this misplaced sense of duty intrude? The enterprise, after all, is nothing if not eclectic. Why bother with Wells if the conclusion is that "he need not be taken seriously"? Why Ellis if he was such "a bore" (albeit "less of a bore in socio-religious matters than Forster, say, or Auden")? The format is encumbered with slab-like bibliographical footnotes, containing information which is often repeated in the adjacent text. The dense foliage of page references in the end-notes effectively obscures the source of any particular quotation. On the one hand, the aspiration seems to be towards encyclopaedic coverage of world-historical figures whose significance transcends merely subjective criteria. On the other, the reference points remain in the end idiosyncratically local and particular. The prospectus for Volume Three, with which the present instalment concludes, promises a discussion of "silent contributors" to the debate: a category which, being "large and distinguished", apparently runs from Gissing, Galsworthy, MacDonald and Schiller to "Leach and Goody, Skinner and Dunn, Hindess and Hirst, and Raymond and Bernard Williams". Such a debate, silent or not, whose sweep takes practically the whole length of King's Parade for its ambit, is clearly not to be missed, and Maurice Cowling is unloquently fitted to write the minutes for posterity (or perhaps eternity).

## Brownies on active service

Peter Warwick

EMANUEL LEE  
*To the Bitter End: A photographic history of the Boer War 1899-1902*  
226pp. Viking. £12.95.  
0670 801437

The South African War fought in 1899-1902 coincided with the rapid expansion of amateur photography. In 1896 George Eastman had introduced the first Kodak camera designed for roll-film. Four years later the first Brownie camera was marketed, at a price in Britain of only five shillings, including two rolls of film. Between 1898 and 1902 nearly 60,000 folding pocket Kodaks were purchased outside the United States, and between 1900 and 1902 almost 150,000 Brownies were sold in the same market. Many of these cameras found their way to South Africa. The war was not the first major military conflict to be photographed, but it was the first campaign in which the officer class and some rank and file had access themselves to the camera. The late nineteenth century also witnessed the development of inexpensive photographic magazines, following the refinement of the half-tono process of picture reproduction during the 1880s. A host of new picture magazines sprang up with the primary purpose of recording the war, and many of the best photo-journalists of the day worked for a time in South Africa.

Drawing upon this extensive amateur and professional pictorial resource base (the former photographs almost invariably more interesting and revealing than the latter, but

Lee, a South African-born consultant surgeon working in Oxford, assembled in *To the Bitter End* a visual record of the war with an accompanying text. For the past twenty years Mr Lee had been researching amateur photographs of the war in Britain, South Africa, Holland and the United States. Given that both photo-journalists and amateurs alike were chiefly interested in recording who was there rather than the realities of combat and military upheaval (at the turn of the century photo-realism lay far in the future), the author skilfully selected an interesting range of pictures, with relatively few portraits and dull posed groupings, which collectively help to provide an intimate feel for the campaign on both the British and Boer sides.

The main strengths of the book are the number and originality of the photographs; the interesting account of the development of camera technology; the discussion and photographs of the medical history of the war and the realities of the concentration camps; and the welcome emphasis given to the final guerrilla stage of the war, when there were few formal battles but more Brownies.

The book's main weakness is the narrative, which adds little new to the political and military history of the war and takes no account of recent scholarship on the war's social history. There is no reference even to Thomas Pakenham's classic study, *The Boer War* (reviewed in the TLS, November 23, 1979). Nor, contrary to Lord Blake's assertion in the preface, is the idea of producing a photographic history of the war an original one. Though no reference is made to it in the book, Johannes Meintjes's *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902: A pictorial history* was published

in 1979. It is a pity that Lee's book, which is a visual record of the war with an accompanying text, does not include a reference to it.

Slabbert - an Afrikaner from the northern Transvaal "backveld", who originally planned to become a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church - was a reluctant politician from the start. When he was being wooed by the Progressive Federal Party to stand, a friend told him that "the just could not see me as a politician in white politics and the more he explained why, the more I had to agree with him". Nevertheless Slabbert stood for parliament, and as an MP stuck it out for twelve years, seven as PFP leader, working indefatigably and seeing the party grow in parliamentary strength; and then he packed it in, abruptly and without warning, and in a way that, according to some of his former colleagues, inflicted the maximum damage on the party.

It is an uneven, somewhat pedestrian book, ranging from the intensely personal (on the first page he confides that his mother was an alcoholic) to the weighty political. The tale Slabbert tells of how he found his liberal beliefs - first by witnessing brutality against blacks, then through religious conversion and a traumatic rebuff when he went into a black township to do missionary work, and finally through establishing personal contact with blacks - is both sad and moving. Slabbert's honesty comes across as an endearing quality. But always the restlessness, the ambivalence, are there.

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## Salvaging lost causes

Linda Colley

J. C. D. CLARK  
*English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancient régime*  
411pp. Cambridge University Press. £30 (paperback, £10.95).  
0521 509220

This is a sometimes interesting, invariably perverse, and profoundly biased book. What it is not, however, is a history of English society from 1688 to 1832. The index, for example, refers us to Brooks's, Boodle's, the Carlton Club, claret, public schools and a plethora of Oxford colleges; yet it omits the army, the law, the empire, the press, poverty, taxation, women and children. All human life is emphatically nowhere; and neither are major agencies of state control. So what do we get instead?

J. C. D. Clark's avowed purpose is twofold. First, he accuses eminent historians like John Brewer, Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, J. H. Plumb, Lawrence Stone and E. P. Thompson (all variously condemned as liberal, socialist or Marxist) of perpetrating "whig history". Anachronistically, these scholars have focused only on those aspects of eighteenth-century England which were "forward-looking": reform campaigns, the rise of unbelief and secular protest. Clark, by contrast, denies the significance of these phenomena and describes England in this period as part of the ancient régime. Its political and familial arrangements were, he claims, deeply patriarchal; its people were established in the hegemony of the landed élite and - until the 1780s at least - in the domination of the Anglican Church.

Clark's second and more heart-felt concern is "reintegrate religion into an historical vision" of this period. This involves arguing, correctly, that radical historians have underestimated the persistence of popular Anglicanism after the Revolution of 1688. More controversially, it means explaining the gradual disintegration of the Revolution Settlement primarily in terms of religion. Thus, in one of his more bizarrely entitled chapters - "Wilkes and the Revival of Socialism in the Church of England" - Clark claims that the growth of protest after the 1760s was not due to middle-class appetite for the vote, to the impact of the American Revolution, to urban growth, industrial expansion or demographic explosion, but rather to the emergence of a more subversive theology among Protestant Dissenters.

The French Revolution further eroded Anglicanism until, by the 1820s, the ruling élite itself had been contaminated. By repealing the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and agreeing to Roman Catholic Emancipation one year later, Whig and Tory patriots con-

vinced in dismantling the confessional state. And, for Clark, this represents a far more potent and radical departure from the past than the electoral changes implemented by the Reform Act of 1832.

What are we to make of this mosaic of insight and idiosyncrasy? In general, we must conclude that the book is useful in so far as it is derivative, and seriously flawed in those sections which are original. As early as 1965 Plumb drew attention to what was stable and traditional in eighteenth-century England. Since then, an industrial recession and rampant conservatism on both sides of the Atlantic have contributed to a succession of books and articles emphasizing what was static and unchanging in this society rather than what was dynamic. Thus Patrick O'Brien and many others have denied the primacy of England's

industrial revolution; Lawrence Stone and John Cannon have analysed the massive power of the great landowners; causes previously dismissed as lost or reactionary - like Toryism and Jacobinism - have been energetically salvaged; and young scholars like Stephen Taylor and Colin Haydon are currently exploring the resilience of Anglicanism. The general reader can be grateful to Clark for synthesizing so much of this recent scholarship.

But there are three major problems. First, what eighteenth-century England, most demands of its historians is subtlety, and Clark's schema is both too narrow and too crude. Too narrow, in that the information offered on England's lower and middle classes in this period is sparse and frequently inaccurate. Thus on one page we are assured that residents of industrial towns "almost always voted". In county elections before 1832, the next page tells us (more correctly) that there were "only a small number of eligible electors in the new towns" and that county contests were anyway rare. The author's lack of confidence in these areas means that he can only assert the continuity of unchallenged élite hegemony in this period: he cannot and does not demonstrate it.

And his approach is too crude because it fails to convey that eighteenth-century England changed over time and was throughout a *mélange* of old and new. So, for example, its formal political structures were indeed traditional, but its population was uniquely and disruptively buoyant.

Second, religion in this period was of vital but not unique importance. Attributing emergent radicalism only to Protestant Dissent ignores the Anglicanism of radical leaders like Christopher Wyllie, John Cartwright and Granville Sharp. It also fails to explain why Dissent in late eighteenth-century England, as in America, sought expression in political and

not just religious deviance. Similarly, to account for the legislation of 1828 and 1829 without giving due weight to events in Ireland or to the parliamentary classes' gradual conversion to toleration - evident since the 1760s at least - is really very odd.

Finally, and most distressingly, the author fails to observe the normal standards of scholarly propriety. On several occasions he borrows methodologies and arguments from other academics without acknowledging his debt in footnotes. He also omits to acknowledge his own bias while being only too ready to smite other historians for theirs. How can we make sense of a passage like this:

It is perhaps possible in the changed climate of the 1980s to re-emphasize the extent to which England's commercial and industrial achievement in the 18th and 19th centuries rested . . . on the virtues of loyalty, diligence, discipline, subordination and obedience in the work-place.

Other than by concluding that this author is present-minded? This is not just eighteenth-century English history in a high-tory, High-Church mould; this is also "whig history" in its glib and spurious neo-conservative fashionability. With better manners and greater mastery of his material, Clark might have written a useful and worthwhile survey. Instead - to borrow an appropriately Anglican description - his book is like the curate's egg.

As Volume Four in its series of Guides to Sources for British History, based on the National Register of Archives, the Royal Commission of Historical Manuscripts has now published *Private Papers of British Diplomats 1782-1900* (800p. HMSO. £5.95. 0 11 440188 8). The content and locations of the collections of 382 individuals (who include senior Foreign Office officials as well as diplomats *en poste*) are briefly described.



# Recovering lost profits

J. R. Maddicott

**ALISON HANHAM**  
*The Celys and Their World: An English merchant family of the fifteenth century* 472pp. Cambridge University Press. £35. 0521 304474  
**A. R. MYERS**  
*Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England* 394pp. Hambledon Press. £24. 090762863X

Not only by their bulk and coherence do the great letter-collections of the fifteenth century mark a new departure in our knowledge of the English past. The private papers of families like the Pastons, the Celys, the Stonors and the Plumptre seem also to possess a humanity, an everyday quality, rarely found in the more formal and fragmentary survivals from earlier times. Land, politics and business may be their staple, but they have, too, a gossip matter-of-factness all the more appealing for being unstudied. How like us, we like to think; here, for the first time in the Middle Ages, are real people. The apparently novel qualities perceptible in these letters have led historians to be free with their labels for the period: an age of ambition, self-awareness, confidence. Yet the collections owe their origin less to any shift in mentality than to other factors, plainer and more humdrum: the growth of education and literacy, the decline of the clerical amanuensis, the supersession of expensive parchment by cheaper paper, the separation of country families by political interests in London, the separation of London families by business interests abroad. If they bear witness to anything, it is not to any grand transformation of the human mind, but to the more prosaic rise of the laity.

Where do the Celys stand in this first age of English letters? In her new book Alison Hanham draws both upon their correspondence, recently edited by her, and upon a mass of unpublished accounts and inventories to produce what is partly a collective biography and partly a business history. Its comparatively short span, from the early 1470s to the late 1480s, covers one generation of a London merchant family whose livelihood came from the export of wool. The central figures are the three Cely brothers, George, Robert and Richard, sons of old Richard Cely, the founder of their fortunes. Most of the correspondence survives because of the jackdaw habits of George, who emerges, in a not entirely admirable way, as the most engaging of the family. For much of the time he was in charge of the firm's affairs at Calais, a position for which he was indifferently suited. Easy-going, affable,

and often casual in his business methods, he nevertheless seems to have hoarded everything that came his way: not just business papers, but also shopping-lists, *aides-memoire*, verses, a challenge to an archery contest, and some piquant notes of a conversation with his French mistress, the Lady Clare, taken down while she was attempting to teach him her language. It was quite in character that he should have later abandoned her in favour of a Calais pudding-maker named Margery, by whom he had two children.

Despite these fragments of tragedy-comedy, the social historian may feel disappointed that so much material yields comparatively little that can be put to systematic use. There is a good deal on love and marriage, something on sickness and disease, only morsels on children, manners, popular religion and death, to take some current preoccupations at random. In two ways, however, the Cely papers are outstandingly helpful. First, they are full of prices, both for everyday commodities and for more exotic ones which George was able to buy in the great marts of the Low Countries. These

make possible some curious comparisons: a ton of coal at 1s 6d, for example, looks very cheap beside a good hawk at 40s. Second, they show, to a degree not easily discernible from other sources, how close were the connections between the merchant community and the land. The Celys lived in the heart of the City; yet they had a country estate in Essex, which provided them with milk, butter and cheese, they wore the livery of one powerful neighbour and they sought the good lordship of another when they were in trouble. It was one of the strengths of that fluid English society which they inhabited that trade and gentility set no barriers against each other.

The Cely papers come into their own as a key to the workings of the wool trade. Business and correspondence went together, as Hanham points out. News from Calais, sent regularly and rapidly to London, was essential to solvency, for on it might depend decisions about purchasing, the repayment of loans, and future borrowing. Financial and commercial affairs take up the five central chapters of her book, inevitably also obtruding into the more bio-

graphical chapters. Hanham has a masterly command of the intricacies of a peculiarly precarious trade, which stretched from the Cotswolds, where the Celys bought most of their wool, to London, where it was packed and shipped, to Calais, where it was sold. Her most demanding pages deal with the complications posed by the sale of wool to Calais. Unstable relations between England, France, Burgundy and the Empire persistently jeopardized mercantile interests there, and in times of peace monetary instability was a more constant and taxing worry. The trade depended on granting extensive credit to the buyer; payment when it came might be in a dozen different currencies, ranging from Flemish shillings to Hungarian ducats; the Burgundian dukes regularly altered the value of the coins circulating in their dominions; and exchange rates in Calais differed according to whether they were set by the king's council or the forces of the market. It is no fault of Hanham's that at times her unravelling of the monetary tangle is almost impossible to follow. One wonders whether the Celys themselves knew what they were about. Certainly they seem to have had no easy way of discovering whether they had made a profit.

The author needs and keeps a clear head among these vertiginous complexities. Coleman, Cerus-Wilson, Power and Postan are among the expert but occasionally mistakes predecessors whom she puts right in her well-mannered footnotes. Her own weakness lies in her reluctance – the reluctance of all professional historians – to discard her working notes. At 430 pages of text her book is too long and sometimes too dense, lacking in the epistola which the lay reader needs. The more discursive and speculative approach of her last chapter could profitably be applied to some of her later and less tractable pages. The work nevertheless remains a splendid achievement. It will become the standard guide to the working of the late medieval wool trade and a humane monument to some of those who made a living from it.

A. R. Myers's main interests lay less in the social and economic world of the Celys than in the politics of their period. His collected papers, *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, largely reflect the creed of the Manchester school in which he was trained: a belief in the centrality of political institutions to historical change, in the importance of administrative history, and in rigorous attention to the records. If he was no innovator, as R. B. Dobson points out in his perceptive introduction, he yet showed how much was still to be discovered by traditional work on traditional subjects. Traditionalists and others will be glad to have his final thoughts within one pair of covers.



An anonymous portrait of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c.1607) reproduced from the book reviewed below.

## A mighty amasser

John Buxton

**DAVID HOWARTH**  
*Lord Arundel and his Circle* 256pp. Yale University Press. £30. 0300034695

"Here comes the Earl of Arundel in his plain stuff and trunk hose and his beard in his teeth, that looks more like a Noble Man than any of us" was the judgment of Lord Carlisle. And the man who collected the Arundel Marbles sought to add to the distinction of the great family of which he was head through the informed excellence of his taste rather than through political power and, as Earl Marshal, refused King James's offer of the Dukedom of Norfolk in a new creation since he considered that it should rather be restored. He was indeed "the grandest man in England" and had no intention that anyone should think otherwise. Proud and arrogant, quick to quarrel but as quick to seek reconciliation, and in manner "off-putting at the best of times", he was "a person of great and universal civility" and, in Rubens's judgment, "one of the four evangelists of our art" of painting. What greater compliments could a man deserve?

Arundel was well served throughout his life by many men of intellectual distinction. Inigo Jones was his companion in his formative first

tour of Italy, and Francis Junius was his librarian, and this scholarly book is concerned with his relations with these. No attempt has been made to reconstruct his collections, which, besides "marbles", comprised paintings, "the best collection of drawings ever owned", gems and cameos, and medieval manuscripts. He began his collections with "marbles", which included statues in bronze as well as in stone, and architectural fragments and inscriptions from the ancient world of Greece and Rome. How far ahead of his time he was in this classical taste is shown by the fate which befell so many of his acquisitions after his death: some were buried under the rubble of a colonnade at Arundel House; some were dumped in waste ground at Kennington; a marble head of an athlete, now in the Ashmolean Museum, was dug up in Surrey Street in 1891; a frieze fragment was dug up on the site of Arundel House in 1972 that had been included by Van Dyck in his painting of the Countess of Scipio, now at Christ Church, Oxford, and so on. He was encouraged in his classical taste by his father-in-law, Lord Shrewsbury, and by Sir Robert Cotton and Thomas Coke (who had collected in Italy for Lord Shrewsbury) and by Inigo Jones, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. Coke was a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, but a more remarkable Cambridge scholar, William Petty, Fellow of Jesus College, went with Arundel to Italy in

1613. (His previous visit in 1612 had been cut short by the death of Prince Henry, but was resumed next year when he escorted Princess Elizabeth to Heidelberg, the capital of her husband, the Prince Palatine.) Petty had all the unscrupulousness and persistence of a great collector: as Sir Thomas Roe told Arundel, "There was never a man so fitted to an employment; that encounters all accidents with an unwearied patience; eats with Greeks on their worst days; lies with fishermen on planks at the best; is all things to all men, that he may obtain his ends, which are your Lordship's service." He was instructed by Coke and Inigo Jones on his first visit to Italy, and he returned there in 1624. Two years later he achieved his most notorious coup, at Smyrna. The agent working for the great French collector Nicolas Peiresc had been put in prison on a trumped-up charge. (Had Petty a hand in this?) He had had to leave thirty Greek inscriptions outside. Petty at once made an offer to the local Turkish Governor, which was at once accepted. Among them was the Parian Chronicle, now in the Ashmolean.

In an age before the great auction houses, collectors regularly worked through private agents who could be sent to travel in Italy and beyond (though few at this time ventured to Greece) and also in the Low Countries. There at Antwerp in 1612 Arundel first met Rubens, with whom he remained on terms of friendship

till Rubens's death. Shortly after their last meeting Rubens painted Arundel's portrait, which is now lost. It is not surprising that Arundel and Rubens were friends; it is surely more unexpected that Arundel and Petty should exchange letters in informal, friendly terms. Arundel's *haute couture*, which irritated many who considered they were his equals, did not trouble such as Petty, or even the fussy and irascible Inigo Jones. This book gives a revealing account of Arundel's relations with artists and agents in the first half of the seventeenth century: it is not a history of his collections but of the means by which they were amassed, and of Arundel's purposes therein.

There are several surprising errors. "On Twelfth Night 1605, the new reign not then a year old" – Queen Elizabeth died on March 24, 1603; Richard Hakluyt was not an Elizabethan explorer; Inigo Jones was hardly "the only English artistic genius" when Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver were active; the Cardinal Virtues on Northampton's tomb, which Arundel commissioned, were preceded by the classical figures on Lord Salisbury's monument at Salisbury; and surely "artisan" is not a category for such Elizabethan houses as Longleat and Hardwick Hall. Nevertheless, this is an excellent celebration of Arundel's fourteenth-century, and amply illustrated, though one might have wished for a list of the illustrations so that they could easily be found.

# The saint and the materialist

Paul Griffiths

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**  
*Selected Correspondence*  
Volume Three  
Edited by Robert Craft  
543pp. Faber. £35. 0571 133738  
**ROBERT CRAFT** (Editor)  
*Dearest Bubushkin: Selected letters and diaries of Vers and Igor Stravinsky*  
239pp. Thames and Hudson. £25. 050011683

The publication of Stravinsky's *Selected Correspondence* has been the cause of some controversy, not least in the pages of this paper; but perhaps the most general reaction has been one of boredom. The letters have proved to contain so little that was germane to the music: much more that had to do with business dealings, with matters of health, with the ephemera of daily life, or with continuing to make polite noises in the direction of old friends. And the harvest was still further thinned by the decision of the editor, Robert Craft, to include letters from Stravinsky's correspondents, which, in some of the epistolary dialogues into which these volumes are arranged, outnumber the composer's own missives. Very often the mounting has seemed more brilliant than the jewel, the most fascinating information coming in Craft's introductions and footnotes, and in his appendices, which have kept us up to date with his Stravinskian researches and commentaries, even if they have had precious little to do with the correspondence.

So it is with this third and final volume. The contents this time include relatively brief exchanges with more French colleagues (Debussy, Satie, Ravel, Poulenc); a correspondence with Gide that, unsurprisingly, falters at the fence of tedium us anything startling about *Perséphone*; a brush with Claudel on the subject of a second, quickly aborted work for Ida Rubinstein; a much longer interchange with Ramuz, balanced by shorter episodes of involvement with others in Switzerland (Cingria, Jacques Handschin, Werner Reinhart); and, accounting for more than half the space, selections from Stravinsky's letters to his publishers from 1928 to 1968: Schott, AMP and Boosey and Hawkes.

## Uncertain grandeur

David Fallows

**ALLAN W. ATLAS**  
*Music at the Aragonese Court of Naples*  
260pp. Cambridge University Press. £35. 0521248280

In September 1943, German occupying forces set fire to the villa where the most important archival documents from Naples had been sent for safe protection. So the historian of the Aragonese court in Naples under Alfonso the Magnanimous (1442-58) and Ferrante I (1458-94) must build his story largely from secondary materials. Documents published or summarised by earlier scholars such as Vander Straeten (1878) and Minelli Riccio (1881) are valuable, as is the more recent inter-war work of Higinio Angles and Tammara de Marinis. But even these men scarcely had access to a complete run of archives: already Vander Straeten had found it necessary to preface his report of his findings with the observation that internal strife had annihilated much significant documentation. For many cities it is possible to recover some portion of the archives destroyed in the Second World War by consulting the private notes of that large band of antiquarians who have spent years copying such materials; but it would appear that such a task in respect of Naples has done less well than most.

Fortunately, musical manuscripts tend to travel more than archives. Likelihoods that they are bequeathed, given to friends, sold at auction and in many cases end up a considerable distance from their place of origin. And one of the most surprising matters to have emerged in the last fifteen years, primarily from Allan Atlas's own doctoral thesis of 1972, is the iden-

tification of a fair number of chanson manuscripts that come from Naples or its surrounding areas. As though to provide a context for this new recognition of Naples's role in music of the late fifteenth century, Atlas has now assembled what must surely count as virtually everything that can usefully be said about the musicians and their context. He has used the available materials – as well as a small body of documents that actually have survived – with considerable resourcefulness and care. And in picking his way through these *membra disiecta* he has succeeded in telling a story that is both elegant and clear. It is not just that his writing is easy to read. Repeatedly he tackles complex issues with the most incisive strategy: he poses a delicate question, offers his answer (often a surprising one) and then systematically presents the considerations that led to his conclusion. It is also a subject that demands the most meticulous clarification of evidence: there is an especially useful chapter which consists purely of an alphabetical enumeration of singers and chaplains at the court, listing the dates of all known references to each and a precise indication of where the details are found; in an earlier chapter on particular musicians he adds much to our knowledge of composers such as Corrado, Vincetot and Veart.

Curiously – and perhaps refreshingly – Atlas paints a picture of music in Naples rather less impressive than the number of surviving chansons or known musicians might suggest. Considerable sums were spent on music, but the results seem to have remained less distinguished than at the courts of Milan, Burgundy, Ferrara and even Savoy in its heyday. And one theme in the book is that Naples never appointed a really great composer. Tinctoris

inspiration in composing it [the *Scherzo à la nisse*]. I answer: the object of my inspiration lies, as always, in music itself and never in things exterior to the music." This may strike us as a non-answer, and possibly was intended as such, though I doubt it. What seems more likely is that, by the simple expedient of denying any relationship between his music and the outer world, Stravinsky allowed himself to write the music of a saint while living a life of self-gratification. And if that relationship has indeed been denied, nobody should be astonished that his letters take us so very short a way towards understanding how and why he composed. Stravinsky the letter-writer and Stravinsky the composer are merely minds who happened to inhabit the same body, at least as far as each of them was concerned.

If this suggests a position of deep duplicity, Stravinsky's shallower duplicity has already been indicated by Craft with reference to the opinion of Florent Schmitt's music voiced in the second volume of this *Selected Correspondence*. Perhaps one may therefore justly doubt him when he expresses to Poulenc his admiration for *Les Biches*. Poulenc, clearly, was not a close friend: the letters printed here cover a period of forty-five years, but only six of them are from Stravinsky (there are twenty-nine from Poulenc), and always he is in haste: "I will write when I am more relaxed" (1922), "I have a great desire to see you again soon . . . But when?" (1924), "My God, there is so much to discuss, but when and where?" (1946).

To other correspondents he was more faithful, and not least to Ramuz. The exchanges of composer and writer around the time of *L'Histoire du soldat* are not very revealing: one learns far more from Craft's appendical study of drafts and revisions, just as one learns more about the genesis of *Perséphone* from his essay, illustrated by a reproduction of Stravinsky's working copy of the libretto, than from the correspondence with Gide. But where the relationship with Gide was broken off abruptly when the latter declined to attend the première of the joint work, Stravinsky remained in touch with Ramuz for nearly twenty years after their collaboration was over, despite what must have been a testing impracticability, indecisiveness and continued fussing over their work in letter after letter from Switzerland.

Possibly there is some explanation in the importance the Swiss years had had in Stravinsky's life, on which the correspondences with Cingria and Reinhart throw a little further light – but only a little, since in both cases Stravinsky's letters are far outnumbered by those of the others. Of Stravinsky to Cingria we hear only two brief acknowledgements, of a book on Petrarch and of the lines for the *Petit Ramusianum harmonique*. Of Stravinsky to Reinhart, the patient patron who served as his Swiss business manager, there is more, but not all; and here one encounters the question of the criteria by which the material has been "selected". Craft mentions that he includes excerpts from only a quarter of Stravinsky's letters to Boosey and Hawkes, and nobody could wish for more. But one does wonder why he omits Stravinsky's letter to Reinhart of January 20, 1934, especially when this has a bearing on the documentation elsewhere in this volume of *Perséphone*: "Ten days now and I hope to have *Perséphone* completely orchestrated. What a labour! I hardly have time to eat and sleep (never more than six hours!)" The complete text of this by no means insignificant letter is in Peter Stulzer's *Zehn Komponisten um Werner Reinhart*, Band I (Winterthur, 1979), p.79.

Other letters by Stravinsky, a bare dozen of them, have been reserved for *Dearest Bubushkin*, which owes its title to Vera Stravinsky's pet name for her husband, and which includes many more letters from her to him, as well as a telegraphic compendium of her diaries from 1922 to 1971, the year of the composer's death. This chronicles their travels and their formidable roster of social engagements, some of which are further evidenced by the copious selection of yet more portrait photographs and snapshots. But the lack of an index is a hindrance. For instance, there is the amusing information that Stravinsky took pains to find out whether Schoenberg would be present at a dinner at the Werfels' to which he and Vera were going, but you will be lucky to find it unless I tell you the occasion took place on August 2, 1943.

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## The first public library

Anthony Pagden

Every reader who goes to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana - every reader, that is, who is not a resident of the Vatican - each morning crosses a national boundary. The Vatican is a sovereign state and the Porta Santa Anna, the gateway through which most visitors enter the city, is a frontier post. It is a fact which is easy to forget. The Swiss Guards (in their undress uniform) look more like footmen than border guards; the formalities are minimal; the only passport required is a reader's ticket. But for the users of the library and the archive, as on occasions for the Italian ministry of finance, the fact that this is an independent city-state is more than a mere historical curiosity.

There are (for the readers) distinct advantages. The library may be financially impoverished by the standards of nearly every other major European collection, but it is not bound by the employment policies of the Italian State and its readers are consequently not subject to the restraints imposed by underpaid and understandably resentful state employees. In the Biblioteca Nazionale, in Rome, readers are allowed to make only one order a day and that for no more than two books at a time (including books on reserve). Serious research is virtually impossible. In the Vatican they are still only allowed three at any one time. But the service is quick (far quicker than in either the British Library or the Bibliothèque Nationale), and you can place as many orders as you wish. The cataloguing system is ancient; but it is easy enough to use, and is nothing like, say, the baroque disorder of the Bodleian's old pre-1920 catalogue.

The Biblioteca was the first ever public library and it is the oldest surviving library in the world. By any standards it is an efficient, well-disciplined institution, though there is no sign of any of the more modern technologies beyond the ancient micro-film reader which stands at one end of the catalogue section like a piece of abandoned mining equipment. It was Nicholas V who gathered together the earlier scattered papal collections into a recognizable library. He himself was a scholar with humanistic interests, and on his death in 1455 he left 1,500 manuscripts to his new creation, many of them copied in the workshop of the famous Florentine bibliophile Vespasiano da Bisticci. Sixtus IV, however, is the true founder of the library as we know it today, for it was he who, by a Bull of June 15, 1475, transformed what had in effect been the pontiff's private library into a foundation dedicated to the "promotion of the Catholic Faith, for the use of scholars and the renown of the Roman Pontiff" - to which ends it is still obviously dedicated, although the order of priority might not, today, be quite the same. Sixtus also appointed Bartolomeo Sacchi, better known as Poggio, after whom one of the major collections is named, as the library's first prefect, and it was he who began the very considerable collections of Latin manuscripts which are its richest possessions.

Sixtus also established a precedent, which the papacy maintains to this day, of appointing as prefect a scholar rather than a professional librarian. The scholarly interests of the prefects have varied enormously over the centuries. The present one, Father Leonard Boyle, is a palaeographer; his predecessor was a canon lawyer. But they have all ensured that in their library, scholarship is given precedence over the mere preservation of the collection. The readers are never made to feel as if they were a serious threat to the environment; and the assistants, though they are not always friendly, and frequently give the impression that they have risen too early and spent too long on slow-moving over-crowded buses, are rarely (as they are in so many other libraries) actively obstructive.

In Sixtus's day the collection was housed in four rooms on the ground floor of the palace of Nicholas V. It soon outgrew these elegant but cramped quarters, and between 1585 and 1590 Sixtus V had the palace rebuilt, Domenico Fontana, create a new lodging for it across the Cortile del Belvedere, along the wide staircase leading to the Cortile della Pigna. The library has since expanded into the west wing that encloses the Cortile del Belvedere and subsequently into the facing wing. It was modernized in the late 1920s by Pius XI, who had been its prefect, and gained four additional floors of storage space under Paul VI.

Storage is now not the problem it was - in part, at least, because the library has for some time only been able to afford books which have some association with the manuscripts in the collection, and essential works of reference. The last prefect, an energetic and enterprising Austrian, began selling, through a German publisher, facsimiles of the most decorative manuscripts in the library. The proceeds from this venture have provided much of the funds for new storage facilities, a new bar (which serves some of the best, and certainly the cheapest, coffee in Rome) and a new office for the prefect. But there is still, it would seem, not enough money made available to the library to allow it fully to sustain even its own modest programme of acquisition. Since the library relies so heavily on donations and hence on the goodwill of those scholars who have (free of charge) used it, the collection of modern editions, even of those authors of which the library holds a substantial number of manuscripts, is incomplete. The recent suggestion of the historian Rosario Villari that the Italian State should make some contribution to the library, seems, for the moment at least, to have come to nothing. In view of the Vatican's involvement in the Calvi affair, and the fact that the State is reluctant to provide its own libraries with sufficient funds to purchase anything that they do not receive on deposit or to pay their librarians a living wage, this is, perhaps, hardly surprising.

But then this is not, of course, nor does it claim to be, a national holding library. Although its holdings in certain obvious areas - theology and canon-law, for instance - are extensive, its attraction for most scholars lies in the enormous wealth of the collection of manuscripts and early-printed books. Many of the manuscripts, and certainly the most famous, are classical. But the library also has some surprising holdings. I, for instance, first went there five years ago to read the lectures on natural law given at the University of Salamanca in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of which the Vatican has a far larger collection, for reasons which are not quite clear to me, than the university itself. Since then, in an effort to understand what seventeenth-century Italians thought of their Spanish political masters, I have worked there on and off on the writings of the dissident friar, anti-Aristotelian magus and utopian political theorist, Tommaso Campanella; for despite the fact that the Papal Inquisition kept him under lock and key for most of his adult life, the Vatican possesses the largest single collection both of manuscripts and of the printed editions (some of them very rare indeed) of his writings.

The library's holdings run to some 70,000 manuscript volumes, about 7,000 incunabula and a further million texts printed after 1500. Only about a third of these are recorded in the modern catalogue, although there are seventeenth and eighteenth-century inventories which, though somewhat erratic, are still usable. There is a large-scale project under way to provide a full and detailed catalogue of the incunabula. Like most such exercises in descriptive bibliography, this has been a long slow task. The first volume, covering A to C, will, it is hoped, be published in about two years. But as the director of the project has now retired, its future seems uncertain. Meanwhile Father Boyle has begun work on an inventory which should soon be available.

The library's reading room is only open in the morning, although it is possible for scholars who are in Rome for short periods to be given permission to work in the afternoon. They will then find themselves very largely in the company of priests; and under the gaze of past pontiffs, the sense of being here as a guest, welcome but also remote, can sometimes be very strong. National libraries are, after all, national institutions - we the taxpayers pay for them - and private libraries usually charge their readers exorbitant fees. But the Vatican Library is part of a nation to which most of its readers do not belong and which charges nothing for its use. It is under no obligation - other than the terms of Sixtus's Bull, which makes no mention of payment - to admit scholars free of charge, much less admit those who have no particular wish to promote the Catholic faith and care nothing for the renown of the pontiff. Given that the library's budget is restricted and that it receives no additional subsidy from its readers, the complaints made by some foreign scholars about the inadequacy of its facilities, are, as the prefect gently suggests, a "shada unfair".

### AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 269

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 4. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct. In which case invited guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 269" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 11.

1. And both shall be the breathing balm,  
And here the alliance and the calm  
Of mute innocentethology.

2. God shall be truly known, and those about her  
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour.  
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.  
Nor shall this peace sleep with her.

3. ... so shall thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

to provide a full and detailed catalogue of the incunabula. Like most such exercises in descriptive bibliography, this has been a long slow task. The first volume, covering A to C, will, it is hoped, be published in about two years. But as the director of the project has now retired, its future seems uncertain. Meanwhile Father Boyle has begun work on an inventory which should soon be available.

The library's reading room is only open in the morning, although it is possible for scholars who are in Rome for short periods to be given permission to work in the afternoon. They will then find themselves very largely in the company of priests; and under the gaze of past pontiffs, the sense of being here as a guest, welcome but also remote, can sometimes be very strong. National libraries are, after all, national institutions - we the taxpayers pay for them - and private libraries usually charge their readers exorbitant fees. But the Vatican Library is part of a nation to which most of its readers do not belong and which charges nothing for its use. It is under no obligation - other than the terms of Sixtus's Bull, which makes no mention of payment - to admit scholars free of charge, much less admit those who have no particular wish to promote the Catholic faith and care nothing for the renown of the pontiff. Given that the library's budget is restricted and that it receives no additional subsidy from its readers, the complaints made by some foreign scholars about the inadequacy of its facilities, are, as the prefect gently suggests, a "shada unfair".

Like all sectors of this, Europe's first and only surviving absolute monarchy, the Vatican's library is suffused with ritual. Etiquette, rather than bureaucratic procedure, is the means by which it controls its readers. Only in the library of the Royal Palace in Madrid does one experience the same sense - although far more strongly in Madrid, with its lived-out form - of standing on the periphery of a royal court. Acquiring a reader's ticket, though easy enough, involves copying out a humble petition to His Holiness for the use of his books. There is also an elaborate rite, involving the visitors' book, one's reader's ticket and a locker key which must be performed each morning before entry to the library is allowed. Readers - the men, that is: no one seems to have worked out a similar requirement for women - are obliged to wear jackets in the Reading Room. In summer this can be very uncomfortable, and I have often wondered, as the sweat dripped uncontrollably off my hands, how much damage it did to the collection.

The guide to the library which all new readers are given carries a warning that any reader who asks the librarians more than three basic, less questions will be expelled. I have noticed an attempt to keep track of my less questions. But there are only two words to ask. Why are there order books at all? On the days the issue counters can be changed in the not-always-so-ordered, readers struggle to get their hands on them. Surely, this being the Apostolic library, there should at least be three, or nine, or twelve.

Competition No 265

Winner: John McAllister

Answers:

1. Death to all cats! The Rule of Dogs shall last a thousand years!  
Peter Porter, "Thou art a cat".

2. Cats, no less liquid than their shadows:  
Offer no apples to the wind.  
A. S. J. Tessimond, "Cats No Less Liquid".

3. You now have learned enough to see  
That cats are much like you and me.  
T. S. Eliot, "The Ad-Bringing of Cats".

The Feminist Book Fortnight will this year take place from June 7 to 21. Eight well-known women will choose two books published in the last year and will explain their selection. The Feminist Book Fortnight catalogue of titles can be obtained from Sex On Demand, c/o Sheila, 10a Bradbury Street, N16 8JN.

## Letters

### Word Technology

Sir, - K.A. Brown (Letters, February 28) has fallen headlong into the very fallacy from which I tried to protect him - and others - namely, confusing the written word with the printed word. My argument, let me remind him, was that, while the printed word might, for mainly economic reasons, have in the very long run a circumscribed future - and with it the book as the physical package for the printed word - the future of the written word was both assured and of fundamental cultural importance.

Thus, all that part of Brown's letter that asserts the indispensable value of the written word - and the essential differences from the spoken word - is irrelevant to any argument he seeks to have with me. If he had read to the end of my article, or had it read to him, he would have found that I said much the same.

What has riled him, apparently to the point of blinding his comprehension, is my suggestion that the written word can be superfluous rendered on a cassette, for example. Irene Sutcliffe's reading of *Pride and Prejudice* for Cover-Cover. Brown seems to think that somehow *Pride and Prejudice* ceases to be the written word because it is read aloud and listened to. He even implies that it then becomes the spoken word and thereby loses the essential properties of the written word, such as that we can browse and re-browse upon it.

This is hopelessly muddled nonsense. It is the written word because Austen wrote it - and could scarcely have composed it without writing it. It remains the written word, however we receive it, whether read from a book, read from Austen's manuscript, listened to when read aloud by someone else or indeed not received at all.

And it is the fact that it was - and had to be - written that is necessary (though not sufficient) to its extraordinary properties, not the fact that we read it from a book. If that were so, a blind person could not appreciate it, which is manifestly untrue. Irene Sutcliffe is reading aloud the written word, not substituting the spoken word.

Brown injects a silly innuendo that the act of listening to the read word implies that we "won't need to think, even notice what the book's words are actually getting at", merely because I pointed out that people who are busy in ways that require the use of their eyes for other purposes than reading may actually be more likely to read - and reread - great works if they are available on cassette. There is absolutely no reason why, to use his examples, a person in a bath or in a garden, or indeed a person who is driving, a person who is doing dull, repetitive manual tasks, a blind person, a person in a darkened room, a paralysed person who cannot manipulate the pages of a book or a person who simply prefers to use his ears rather than his eyes for the purpose should not think just as deeply, seriously and concentrately about Austen, Kant, Eliot or anyone else as Brown poring over his printed pieces of paper.

"Reading," says Brown, "isn't easy". It is not that difficult either, although having read from cover to cover Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (frequently cited by Brown as unsuitable to be rendered as "light murmuring chat" to the man in the bath-tub) I would concede that some books are tough going - and probably uneconomic to render on, to someone.

But when he says that "books still remain widely our main source of information and culture," he is either making a claim that no one would dispute - and which I made myself in the original article - about the intellectual and artistic content of books or he is making an increasingly questionable assertion about the future economics of printing, paper, production and binding in competition with other means of storing and retrieving the written word, such as microfilm, cassette and disk.

Brown asserts that "a profound re-adaptation of the written word, as it is now, is in women will choose two books published in the last year and will explain their selection." I did not mention it because it is simply not true; and, more importantly, it would have nothing whatever to do, even if it were true, with the difference between the

written and the spontaneously spoken word, a difference which depends on the originating actions of the author of the words, not on the methods used to receive them.

Neither the essence of Austen's creation nor our ability to acquire it depends on print or binding (since she had to write it before it could be printed or bound) or on the exercise of the reading eye (unless Brown thinks that Milton in his blindness was incapable of literary appreciation). They depend on the exercise of Austen's genius and our intelligence and sensitivity, not on the mechanics of transmission between those two poles.

I foresaw - and said - that anyone who questioned the immortality of the "book" in its physical sense would cause muddled traditionalists to froth at the mouth. But I did not expect quite such sonorous tripe as Brown's conclusion that "we would be throwing away a great deal of our individual freedom and our history in crossing over to a cassette-based, or video-based, or whatever [sic], form of culture".

I have not suggested a "video-based" culture, still less a "whatever" culture. That is just irrelevant raving. Cassettes, by contrast, can play a useful part as one way of delivering the written word to those who want to receive it or, indeed, to browse upon it. No freedom, individual or otherwise, depends on the rejection of this opportunity.

It is not books or cassettes as such that will liberate the Russian citizen. It is the right to choose any book or any cassette for himself or herself, unrestrained equally by state policemen and by the bibliophile old guard who insist on confusing the physical format of the book with the artistic and intellectual essence of its duly composed content.

PETER JAY.  
Garlick Club, London WC2.

### Sexual Desire and Moral Theory

Sir, - As a student of Kant, I was surprised that Galen Strawson, in his review (February 28) of Roger Scruton's *Sexual Desire*, chose the words "provocative exaggeration" to describe Scruton's claim that the erotic "is fundamental to a full understanding of what it is for persons to be 'ends in themselves'".

If one is at all persuaded by Kant's moral theory, for all its flaws (and what moral theory is flawless?) it seems perfectly legitimate to enlist Kantian ethics in a work of philosophy that sets out to be illuminating about interpersonal relationships. Kant was extremely strong on what it is to treat each other with respect, giving a very interesting moral account of what philosophy of mind today calls "the concept of a person".

By "provocative exaggeration" is Strawson saying "I'm not a Kantian" or what? He's not at all clear on this point. (On a purely intuitive, pre-philosophical level most of us would agree that respect comes into the picture somewhere - the big question is where?)

It also seems odd to me that in criticizing a work of philosophy written in the analytical tradition Strawson accuses it of claiming "truths that are truths only by virtue of bending the ordinary meaning of words". A central project of the book, according to my reading, is to arrive at a coherent meaning of "sexual desire" via a carefully plotted course through the differences between "sex" and "gender"; the role "intentionally" plays in "personhood"; the meaning of "embodiment"; etc. One doesn't have to agree with Quine about the vagaries of definition to dispute Strawson's "word-bending" charge; say more than one has to be a Humean to defend Scruton from the allegation of "confusing theory with autobiography".

One more point. I didn't take the book to be overtly concentrating on an ideal of sexual desire. I took it that sexual desire has a course and can stop at any point along that course. This does not divide desire into the "ideal" and the "perverted", as Strawson seems to suggest. Is it not a philosopher's convention to talk in paradigms and is there not a distinction (philosophically speaking) between a paradigm and an ideal?

MARY L. KNAPP  
121A Westbourne Park Road, London W2.

### Byzantine Lead Seals

Sir, - In her letter of January 31, Janet Zacos tries to belittle my contribution to *Byzantine Lead Seals* and extol that of her husband. She does not know that sigillography is so complex that George Zacos could never have written that book alone; the same is true for myself. It is our close co-operation that has rendered this book possible. When Zacos left Istanbul in 1963, we were obliged to organize two research centres, one in Basel and another in Istanbul. There was a continuous exchange of notes and letters, of draft descriptions and commentaries on every seal appearing in Volume Two until I typed the final script that I sent to Zacos from Istanbul. We were united in our common ideal to make a contribution to the history of our birth-place. Under these circumstances, I never received any salary from Zacos. On the contrary, I spent large sums to assemble books on history, art, numismatics and lead seals. In addition, I never asked for a share in the profits, but Zacos had promised me that my name would appear as co-author on the title page.

The truth about Mr Chazdikis is that I wrote him that he could not sponsor the book unless he mentioned the names of the two authors, namely Zacos and Vegler. Similar remarks were made to him by the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in Paris. He answered that he cared for scientific standards only, and not for names of authors. Unfortunately, Mr Chazdikis could not be persuaded to change his mind.

ALEXANDER VEGLER.  
Yenköy, Dürhem Sokak 11, Istanbul.

### 'The Adding Machine'

Sir, - In James Campbell's quite reasonable review of the John Calder edition of my collected essays, *The Adding Machine* (January 24), he notes: "The book has been assembled with appalling carelessness; there are numerous printing mistakes (up to five on a page)..."

I would like your readership to be aware that Mr Calder did not consult me with his final draft of the manuscript; nor did he submit any page proofs or galley proofs to me or my representatives before publication. Any complaints about the book's assembly and editing must therefore be directed to him.

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS.  
William Burroughs Communications, PO Box 147,  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044.

### 'The Originals'

Sir, - Though not normally given to violence, I have inadvertently blinded and disfigured the late Donald Carswell, husband of the novelist and biographer Catherine Carswell, in my recently published book, *The Originals: Who's really who in fiction* (reviewed in the TLS of November 29, 1985).

John Carswell, writing to point out that his father was neither blind nor disfigured, asks me - for the record - to restore his father's sight and appearance through this letter to you, and this I now hasten to do. Donald Carswell came to be maimed in *The Originals* through my misreading an ambiguous passage in a D. H. Lawrence biography.

Catherine Carswell has been discerned in Isabel Perin in Lawrence's story, "The Blind Man". Interestingly, John Carswell suggests that his father, far from being a model for Maurice Perin, was "no bad match for the story's Bertie Reid" - "a barrister and a man of letters, a Scotsman, of the intellectual type, quick, ironical, and sentimental".

WILLIAM AMOS.  
Hackett Forge, Little Langdale, Cumbria.

The Royal Historical Society announces that the Alexander Prize for 1986 has been awarded to Dr Chris Given-Wilson of the Department of Mediaeval History, University of St Andrews, for his essay, "The King and the Gentry in Fourteenth-Century England". The 1985 David Berry Prize, offered triennially for the best essay on Scottish history between the reigns of James I and James VI, has been awarded to Dr G. Mark Dittworth, Keeper, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, for "The Commendator System in Scotland".

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# Language on the move

John A. C. Greppin

T. V. GAMKRELIDZE AND V. V. IVANOV  
Indoeuropejskij jazyk I Indoeuropejcy  
Two volumes, 1,328pp. Tbilisi University  
Press. RS 13.30.

The delivery of these two massive volumes on "The Indo-European Language and the Indo-Europeans" is no small event. Work on them, known from preliminary articles appearing as early as 1973, has been steady, evolutionary and well publicized through frequent and repeated discussions. What T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov have done is propose a major relocation of the earliest Indo-European homeland and to project, for the linguist, a newly redefined consonantism and grammatical structure for the proto-Indo-European language – two remarkable feats.

Gamkrelidze is the director of the Oriental Institute in Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia. Though in a geographical backwater, the Institute ranks among the first of its kind in the world, and Gamkrelidze himself is a member of the prestigious Soviet Academy of Sciences and a corresponding member of the British, Austrian and American academies. His co-author, Ivanov, is known in the West for his work in Semiotics: he is a productive member of the Tartu School. He works in Moscow in the Institute for Slavic and Balkan Studies and is a corresponding Fellow of the British Academy. Both authors are thus highly visible and well known in the West, where Gamkrelidze frequently appears with the perks allowed to a Soviet super-star, for in that country brilliant academics are treated in the same way as successful pianists and ballerinas.

The work is divided into two sections, one on grammar and one on geographical origins. It is the latter which will probably receive the greater support from other scholars. In it, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov propose that the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans can be moved, both in space and time, from its third-millennium location north of the Black Sea to an earlier and somewhat general area near the juncture of modern Iraq, Syria, Turkey and certainly including the great eastern Anatolian lakes, Lake Van and Lake Urmia. Removing it there in no way contradicts our current Pontic area theories, the work on which by the Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas has been largely accepted. But Gamkrelidze and Ivanov claim to have identified an area where the proto-Indo-Europeans lived earlier still, and that Gimbutas's Pontic location of their homeland was merely the final staging-area for the leap into Europe in the third millennium. Theirs, they suggest, is a pre-Pontic staging area from which certain of the proto-Indo-Europeans (who would become the Slavs, Balts, Celts, Germanic and Italic peoples) left to head northward to the Pontic Area, and from which others, who would become Iranian and Indic tribes, moved in a different direction to the secure homelands where we find them today. The Armenian and Hittite peoples never really left at all, and the Greeks tarried a while before moving westwards across Anatolia eventually to cross the dark Hellespont and enter into their historical peninsula.

Gamkrelidze and Ivanov have virtually no hard archaeological evidence to support their claims; instead they use linguistic analysis. Initially, they cite the residue of Semitic vocabulary in proto-Indo-European. Since the end of the last century, especially in the work of the Danish scholar Hermann Møller, it has been noted that many Semitic words were common to the various Indo-European languages, and especially, by loan, in Greek. The word for *horn* is a prime example, having the Semitic tri-literal root *q-r-n*, and appearing in Latin as *cornu*, followed by a plethora of other Indo-European cognates. The word for *wine* is the same; it seeped into English as *vino*, into Latin as *vinum*, and is suspiciously close to Hebrew *yayin*, Arabic *wajn* and Ethiopic *wejn*. *Goat* has similar affinities: Hebrew *gadi*, Akkadian *gadu*, Latin *haecus* (h: by a phonetic law), and English *goat* itself are all clearly related. Such a list could be greatly extended, and is supremely interesting.

It has always been assumed that the particularly large number of Semitic words in Greek, as well as the strong Semitic influence on Greek mythology, were part of some unique coupling of those two distinct cultures, though no one has ever before clearly explained how it came about. Similarly, scholars have recently begun to take note of the strong similarities between Armenian and Greek. These, it was formerly posited, occurred because the proto-Armensians and the proto-Greeks shared a common land in their earliest days in the Balkans in the third millennium, before exploding out into Greece proper, or, for the Armenians, turning east, crossing the Hellespont and plodding the length of Anatolia to their final homeland. Now it is clear that the similarities come from an ancient co-relationship in the Middle East.

Thus the proto-Greeks, Armenians, Hittites and Indo-Iranians had migration patterns different from the Indo-European groups (the proto-Slavs, Balts, Celts, etc) who drove into Europe from the Pontic area. And this is an important separation. Hitherto we had to view an enormous post-Pontic migration eastward by the proto-Indo-Iranian tribes, an idea which did not explain for one thing how the Hittites got into their central Anatolian homeland, nor from where. Certain pre-Greek problems are also resolved, for the traditional view that the so-called Greek cities in Anatolia were colonies laid down by the peninsular Greeks leaves unexplained the fact that certain Greek cities in Anatolia are of great age, particularly Miletus, where we find a very early horse-burial grave, dating from the middle of the second millennium. How this could exist if the flow of Hellenic civilization was from west to east is difficult to imagine; but it is easily explained by the system of Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, who claim that some so-called Greek colonies of Asia Minor actually pre-dated the cities of peninsular Greece.

Much helpful light is shed upon the Hittite problem also. The Hittites apparently did not migrate south from the Pontic area, or from elsewhere, to central Anatolia but rather, as with the Armenians slightly to their east, this was approximately where they had always been. The mysterious proto-Indic vocabulary found, undoubtedly by loan via Hittian, in certain Hittite documents on horse-racing can be acceptably explained by the very closeness of these two peoples in, perhaps, the fourth millennium.

Gamkrelidze and Ivanov do not base their hypothesis for a southern, pre-Pontic grouping

of the Indo-Europeans on Semitic data alone. To them they boldly add data from Caucasian loan-words. Their ideas are built on the lesser suppositions of other scholars. Igor Diakonoff has argued, for instance, that the Hurrians and the Urartians, non-Indo-European peoples of eastern Anatolia from whom we have a fair amount of writing, spoke a language that can be related to the still surviving languages of the eastern Caucasus. Indeed, there is every reason to think that the language now confined to the rugged Caucasian mountains once extended farther south. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov maintain that they not only extended far south, but had actual contact with the proto-Indo-Europeans. And if a proto-Indo-European contact with the Caucasian people can be posited, it would more likely have occurred in the south, rather than in the north Caucasus contiguous to the ancient Pontic area. Thus the proto-Indo-Europeans, in their Levantine reserves, were surrounded by Semitic people on the south and east, by the Caucasian people on the north, while on the west extended the vast and nearly empty Anatolian plateau.

It would be reasonable to expect that certain Indo-European words with Semitic parallels might also have Caucasian ones. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov list numerous sets. Of interest are the Kartvelian cognates for *wine* which can be added to the examples I gave above: Georgian *gvino*, Laz *gvwlin*, Swan *gvwlin*, which must have come into Kartvelian at a very early stage. The Indo-European word for *earth* approximates *\*dhegh-*, and we have it represented in Hittite *tekan*, Tocharian *tkam*, Greek *khthōn* (with explainable metathesis) and others. To this probably may be added Old Georgian *tiqa* "clay", Laz *(n)dxka*, and Megrelian *dexa*. An abundance of such etymologies are offered; though not all of them are as convincing. They constitute part of Gamkrelidze's and Ivanov's argument for moving the Indo-Europeans to this new Middle Eastern homeland.

The second half of their argument is phonological and technical, and involves casting the proto-Indo-European consonant inventory. The currently accepted theory which began to form nearly 200 years ago and has since gone through much refinement, is, most simply, a threefold system of:

(b)	bh	p
d	dh	t
g	gh	k

Gamkrelidze and Ivanov recast this using a glottalized series of consonants known now in

the Caucasian languages and presumed to be proto-Semitic as the antecedents of the languages:

(p')	b(h)	p(b)
t'	d(h)	t(h)
k'	g(h)	k(h)

This is a major revision; for proto-Indo-European no longer follows a pattern based on the Indic model, as Franz Bopp laid down over a century ago; rather, it corresponds to what we find in proto-Germanic and nearly to what we have for Armenian. The arguments, supporting this new theory, however, have found little acceptance, except from linguists who tend to chase with passion after non-traditional models. The new consonantism seems to have little effect on our present interpretation of parallel systems; instead, it would appear to be a change made in a vacuum for its sake alone, without ramifications.

Eric Hamp, in a recent address in Paris, made strong criticism of these views, and echoed some of the cautious sentiments maintained by a large number of Western linguists. As it stands, the new phonology expressed by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, and the typological arguments which support it, are finding scant acceptance.

But though the phonological argument is perhaps the weaker half of this book, the ideas of Gamkrelidze and Ivanov regarding the location of the Indo-Europeans have considerable charm and may receive much greater acceptance. They have, of course, been criticized. Diakonoff has asked, for instance, why, if the Armenians were indigenous to this ancient homeland, they borrowed so many terms from the Hurrians, as they did, when their own words should have been available. He has also questioned the economy of the new southern location, for although it resolves the problems of the great West-East movement of the Indo-Iranians, it introduces a still more extensive South-North movement for the European members of the Indo-European family.

Certainly, the Indo-European hypothesis put forward by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov is the most complex, far-reaching and fully supported of this century and the discussion of them will go on well into the future (an English translation by the Slavist Johannes Niekisch is to be published by Mouton, in 1987). Indo-Europeanists will await the unfolding of the debate eagerly, for we have come a long way since, in 1818, Rasmus Rask placed his proto-Indo-Europeans homeland in Paphlagonia.

more than two or three scrappy pages to the Egyptian script is a major shortcoming of the book.

The chapters on the Greco-Roman alphabet and on English spelling are also defective. Questions of modern English spelling, interesting though they may be in themselves and relevant to the author's overriding concern with phonetics, are purely orthographic. I cannot grasp the methodological principles which enable Sampson to put such matters on all fours with major systems of writing. By contrast, the Greek alphabet certainly deserves a place (if only for its importance in our own culture); one cannot say the same about the forms of medieval writing or of modern typefaces. But the Greek alphabet, while an obvious candidate for inclusion, is given a confused and (apparently) second-hand account. Again Sampson's interests are predominantly phonetic. He does not consider where the Phoenician system might have been borrowed for the writing of Greek; and although he mentions the "western" and "eastern" versions of the Greek alphabet he does not explain how they differ or how the differences arose. Nor does he say anything coherent about the dialects of Greek, with their varying scribal requirements. Sampson's unfamiliarity with Greek is suggested by the statement (contradicted by the evidence he himself presents) that "Greek script distinguished vowel quality but not vowel quantity".

By contrast, his chapters on Chinese, Japanese and Korean are extremely interesting. The two-fold importance of the Chinese script is well brought out: first in its maintenance

of the logographic principle over an immensely long period (contrary to the phonographic basis of other systems); second, in its function as a vehicle by which the high culture of China was transmitted to Korea, Japan and other parts of Asia. These reacted in differing ways to the impact of the Chinese script and language. In the fifteenth century the Koreans devised an elegant answer to the problems of representing the sounds of their language, without having recourse to the Chinese script. Although its prestige took a long time to eclipse that of Chinese, the Korean Han'gul comes close to providing a complete transcription of the phonetic elements of the language. As Sampson puts it, "the five consonant-families are represented by (highly stylized) pictures of articulations involved": the vowels are indicated similarly by combinations of lines and dots. Unlike the Koreans, the Japanese broke away from the Chinese script; and the historical reasons why are set out by Sampson. But it was impossible for them to adopt the Chinese system without making fundamental changes to allow for the representation of their own language, which is fundamentally different from Chinese. The result is that Japanese writing is, what Sampson calls, a "mixed system", being partly logographic and partly phonographic. Its complexities are indicated.

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# Infinite riches in a little room

Peter Conrad

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Hamlet is the greatest of plays because the most skittishly, dangerously playful. It ignores the injunction of Aristotle that drama should mobilize character for action. Instead of dramatic activism, the idle or whimsical Hamlet chooses acting, or mere antics. His evasion deprives him from the fatal foreclosure of tragedy, and opens out the play into a comedy of consciousness, infinitely resourceful and fantastically mobile yet reluctant ever to do anything – the dreaming ineffectuality of Tristram Shandy or of Coleridge, of Beckett's downy passing the time or of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern plotting to rewrite the Shakespearean text which has foretold them.

Like every great literary work, *Hamlet* has reorganized history around itself. It is at once an end and a beginning. It ends the dominion of classical tragedy (despite Freud's footnote aligning the hero with Oedipus, or H. D. F. Kitto's attempt to set the play in an Aeschylean "philosophic or 'religious' framework"), because it disputes the tragic rule that the individual is accountable for his actions. Hamlet, when accused, exonerates himself by a veritable self-contradiction, proposing to Laertes that "Hamlet's madness", not Hamlet himself, destroyed his family, taunting those who reproach him by revoking his words before anyone else can fix on them. "I have nothing with this answer Hamlet", says Claudius sternly, "these words are not mine." Hamlet can't be bothered to defend himself, and leaves the debate eagerly, for we have come a long way since, in 1818, Rasmus Rask placed his proto-Indo-Europeans homeland in Paphlagonia.

More decisively still, *Hamlet* changes the classical form by miniaturizing the public field of tragic action. Where Aeschylean characters battle to impose the law or Sophoclean characters arrive at their crossroads, Denmark's elective monarchy and Fortinbras's military excursions are irrelevant to Hamlet, whose province is his own nutball-shaped, astatic mind. Elated, in the décor of Olivier's film, is the grey tunnelled catacomb of a brain. After *Hamlet*, that enclosure will be the allotted space of a drama which has contracted from the social to the psychological: Maeterlinck's nocturnal kingdom of *Allamonde* in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, the white vacancy of Ibsen's *Brand*, the spiritual nowhere of Strindberg's *Dream Play*.

Gordon Braden's study, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, which ends with *Hamlet*, demonstrates one way in which the play turns the history it inherits inside out. Braden begins from the angry warmongering of Seneca's drama: the omnipotent will whose motto is "Medea superest". The lady-in-wait is the sole author of himself, and exterminates anyone who dares claim responsibility for creating him. Nero killing his mother is, as Flaubert declared, "l'homme culminant, du monde antique". This theatrical rage to invent and sustain the self is passed on from Seneca to Tamburlaine or to Milton's Satan, who have no parents and who deny God's authorship of them; but its tribune aggressiveness is contradicted by Shakespeare. Nero's "imperial self", as Braden calls it, must, in the Senecan play *Octavia*, destroy the woman who presumes to have mothered him, Coriolanus, however, can't imagine that existential feat; and in *Macbeth* the man not of a woman born is inviolable only because he is monstrous, spared the games of birth and its induction into suffering. Hamlet's entire problem is his helpless obligation

The Senecan hero enjoys a monomaniacal solitude, having eliminated all who compete with him for occupancy of the stage. Shakespeare's characters exist in a world which is densely peopled, and must adjust themselves to peritizing it. Despite Hamlet's reputation as a moody monologist, no one is more inquisitively sociable or more promiscuously friendly than he. In him, the mad rhetoric of Seneca self-assertion reaches its terminus. In contrast with Medea's boast, Shakespearean characters must tolerate the world's cancellation of the precious ego: "This is not Lear". When Hamlet bellows "This is I, Hamlet the Dane", the I he proffers and the tone which broadcasts it are not authentic. He is seeking to outrun Laertes, and he soon remorsefully quiets this self-interested rant. Seneca argues, Braden argues, has been reflectively internalized. Hamlet's most intense declamatory violence is directed against himself.

Thus, from the play which involutes the bombastic individualism of Seneca, there emerges a new kind of literary character, romantically insecure and dubious, rather than classically monopolistic. This is the Hamlet of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, lacking the strength of nerve to be a hero, or of Mallarmé, for whom the black prince was a worm of doubt and scepticism fatal to everyone, whether he took the trouble personally to kill them or not. The new romantic Hamlet is appropriated by the philosophers as an abstract of modern man – the "ce moi" of Descartes, "the soul by which I am what I am"; the contrite, divided consciousness of Hegel; the meditative mystic of Schopenhauer (who thought *Hamlet* was beautiful because nothing was allowed to happen in it), disdaining the world as all wilful fiction and false representation. Selves such as these raise their voices in drama at their own risk. Beyond *Hamlet*, as Braden demonstrates, the onomastic craze of Seneca leads to a dead end. Beckett's character may insist "I am Pozzo . . . Does that name mean anything to you?" but Vladimir can only dimly recall "a family called Gozdo. The mother had the clap." Hamlet's success is to have achieved his own debasement as a hero. Elliot's Freudock denies he was ever meant to be Hamlet, and would rather be an attendant lord; Stoppard makes those attendant lords the tragic heroes of the play, existentially and absurdly at hazard.

Revising its own past – whether that lineage starts in Seneca, or in the Danish history of

Saxo Grammaticus, whose Amleth slaughters an eavesdropper, sections the corpse and feeds it to the pigs – *Hamlet* is in turn revised by the posterity it generates. Philip Edwards reviews its theatrical variants in his new Cambridge edition. Garrick performed a version which omitted all reference to Hamlet's English voyage and allowed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to disappear unmolested from the action; in another of his acting texts, the grave-diggers were excised, and the fencing match was staged during Ophelia's funeral. These were sentimental mollifications. Garrick's Hamlet, forgiven by Laertes, ran upon his opponent's sword, so that they could expire in fraternal amity. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regularly excluded Fortinbras from the final scene, ending, instead, when Horatio bids Hamlet good-night. The military annexation of Denmark returned only in 1897, when Forbes-Robertson was persuaded by Shaw to restore it. The ending mattered to Shaw because of its implicit adverse judgment on the hero's irresponsibility. "Born into the vindictive morality of Moses", Shaw's Hamlet has evolved towards forgiveness and ethical understanding – but not far enough. And the fault is Shakespeare's, who has not "plumbed his play to the bottom" since he so unscrupulously allows Hamlet to kill off Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In 1868, Ambrose Thomas's operatic *Hamlet* devised a lyrical mitigation of the end, bringing the ghost back after the murder of Claudius to nominate Hamlet as the rightful heir and sentence Gertrude to expiation in a nunnery.

Other emendations were made to voice a critic's silent commentary on the play. Dr Johnson for instance, as Edwards notes, favoured assigning the line "Oh horrible, oh horrible, most horrible!" in the ghost's narrative to the listening Hamlet. Actually, he was claiming it for himself. As a boy, Johnson – who told Boswell that all argument is against our accrediting the existence of spirits, while all belief is for it – was so alarmed by this scene in the play that he ran out of the house and, to prove to himself that the world was solid after all, clung to a lamppost. "Oh horrible!" is Johnson's protest, rather than Hamlet's. Johnson's terrified conviction of personal doom made him wish other changes on the play: the lines in which Hamlet spares the praying Claudius so as to damn him the more irrevocably on another occasion seemed to Johnson "too terrible to be read or to be

uttered". Dramatizing as it does the hauntings of consciousness and the disquiet of identity, *Hamlet* invites such personal adoption and adaptation. Coleridge was speaking for everyone when he admitted "I have a smack of Hamlet myself", and Hazlitt soon after generalized the identification by the use of a plural pronoun: "it is we who are Hamlet". When Tom Jones takes his servant to see Garrick play the role, the apparition of the ghost turns even simple Partridge, briefly, into a gibbering Hamlet.

It is the duty of actors to introduce modifications of their own. Philip Edwards complains in his introduction that "director's theatre" confuses the play with intrusive interpretative glosses and "discourages great acting". He names no names, so it's hard to see what he means – Marowitz's cut-up of the text, perhaps? In any case, the interpreting of Hamlet must derive from the personality of the actor, not from a director's theory. The actors redesign the prince to suit the modes of self-awareness of each new generation. Garrick's Hamlet was a man of feeling, frozen in postures of Sterner rapture or astonishment. Kemble was more romantically soulful: W. A. Mordaunt, who bought Thomas Lawrence's portrait of him in the role (reproduced by Edwards), wanted to make it the altar-piece of the church in his model town of Trenadoc, unofficially sanctifying the ineffectual angel who clasps the skull. Shaw praised Forbes-Robertson for advancing beyond the humid sensibility of Garrick and the solipsistic mooning of Kemble – he was "thoughtful but not in the least sentimental". The hero was for Shaw an intellectual, and he derided the performance of an actor called Netcombe Gould for having "all Hamlet's appearance, something of his feeling, but little of his brains". Among modern Hamlets, that brain grows disturbed and diseased. Olivier was the first clinically neurotic Hamlet, diagnosed according to the Gedipal theory of Ernest Jones, and so sickened over with the pale cast of thought that his hair had to be bleached; since then there have been David Warner's truculent angry young man, Jonathan Pryce's twitching epileptic (regurgitating the ghost like the girl with the green bile in *The Exorcist*) and the manic fidgeter played last year by Roger Rees.

The same variability accounts for the play's textual multiplicity. Empson long ago surmised that the disagreements between the quartos and the folio correspond to a theatrical liberty – sometimes, abbreviated, the play was given as a brisk thriller; for other audiences, it was expanded with quizzical supernumerary matter like How all occasions do inform against me, and presented as a formal puzzle, questioning its own inconsistencies. Philip Edwards concedes that "if the prince were not so mercurial the text would be more stable". Hamlet pretends to be textually punilious, reminding himself to transcribe the villany of Claudius in his tables, and he is accused by Gertrude of talking like a book and thundering in the index. Telling Horatio of the forged death-warrant, he notes that he

wrote it fair.  
I once did hold it, as our statists do,  
A business to write fair, and laboured much  
How to forget that learning.

Scrawl, scribble and crossings-out come naturally to Hamlet: only when being sanctimonious or disingenuous – lecturing Gertrude or faking that letter – does he worry about writing. Shakespeare, with his foul papers, his second thoughts and his nonchalant lapses (forgetting how long Horatio had been in Denmark or how long Hamlet and Ophelia had been apart before the nunnery scene, having Hamlet point out a cloud in a scene set indoors and at night), has no pedantic conscience about consistency. The illegibility of Hamlet's penmanship matches the unreadability of his behaviour. As Edwards remarks, in 2.2 he denies the theory of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that his melancholy is frustrated ambition; then in 3.2 he confirms it, proposing to them that "I lack advancement".

Self-contradiction guards his theatrical liberty of manoeuvre, and for Shakespeare, too, a play's life lies not in but underneath the text. *Hamlet* therefore resembles a do-it-yourself kit for interpreters. Even the most famous episode

## Annigoni

My director has only minutes to spare.  
He's fine, his children are fine, his Institute prospers.  
He's put on weight  
and grown even smaller. There are students waiting.

Days to the south, conscript soldiers  
do their best to keep out of the enemy's sights  
in a landscape without natural cover . . .  
The ashtrays might never have been emptied.

For a year here I taught the rudiments  
of the English language; Annigoni's Queen  
and a photo of Hassan Deux in dapper lounge suit  
graced the classroom walls. Mornings

were housewives – and one, I recall, for the national holiday,  
was flying to London. Our vocabulary lesson  
was designed around what she should pack:  
*toothbrush, hairbrush, passport, visa, umbrella.*

After the freak storms the river is swollen  
and brown; the *bidonville* alleys a knee-deep in mud.  
Kites and the tourist charter planes seem reluctant to land.  
On the ornate façade the masonry is loose, and those

who step out on the balcony with a glass of wine  
and a favoured companion, or simply to watch  
the girls in Paris dresses stroll the Boulevard  
Libération, do so at their own risk.



to 3.1, though it ought properly (as Edwards comments) to come earlier, before Hamlet's decision about the play within the play. Our every assumption is sooner or later contradicted by this ludic contraption, which can be reconstructed at will. Just when we decide that Hamlet is an archetypal adolescent or (as for David Wamer) a rebellious student, the grave-digger announces that he is thirty years old; just when we agree to see him as an abominous intellectual, not a gory revenger, he begins to rave about gulping blood; just when we have assembled an image of him as an anorexic waif, Gertrude calls him fat. Edwards gets defensive about such hiccupps, and tries to argue them into submission with contradictions of his own. Though Hamlet plainly volunteers to "drink hot blood", Edwards explains anxiously that he "does not mean he would like" to do so. But why not? He is experimenting theatrically, rehearsing the enactment of diabolical possession and hinting, like Diderot's elegantly fraudulent "comédien", that his is only a studied and simulated passion:

I will speak daggers to her but use none.  
My tongue and soul in this are hypocrites.

Edwards is equally flustered by Hamlet's unsuspected competence, unable to convince himself that "fat" means sweaty and wondering instead if Gertrude is merely apologizing that he is soft and out of condition. But Hamlet's imagination recurs often to swollen self-possession, a fatness which is the body's autonomy and its comfort. The ghost fears he will prove a "fat week", and after killing Polonius, Hamlet begins to understand the gourmandizing festivity of death and to unlearn the morbidity of tragedy: "we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots". To Yeats, Hamlet's almost Buddhist wisdom required him to be bulbous. He was not, Yeats insisted, "thin from eating flies", cankerous and life-hating; his folly made him "a fat / Dreamer of the Middle Ages".

Contradiction licenses the character to be anyone and everyone, from Sterne as Tristram Shandy revivifying a parsonical Yorick to Seamus Heaney declaring "I am Hamlet the Dane" as he dabbles in the muddy bog. The same principle entitles the play to mean anything and everything. Its words slip and slide between the several texts, their mistranscriptions on the way begetting a Joycean free-for-all of puns and quibbles. The play's language is wantonly playful, and the proliferation of its ambiguities disconcerts Edwards. Sometimes he is keen to engage in the game of multiplying senses, and when Hamlet says he has named *The Mousetrap* "tropically", meaning that it's a trope or metaphor, Edwards adds that "Q1's 'tropically' shows the Joycean pun". He is also loath to rearrange the muddled line in which Ophelia, lamenting Hamlet's insanity, attributes a tongue to the soldier and a sword to the scholar rather than vice versa. "Hamlet's sword", Edwards paradoxically contends, "is his intellect and . . . he fights with his tongue" — yet, to be literal-minded for once, doesn't he specifically fancy himself as a fencer? For the most part, however, Edwards's policy is to curtail the litany of meanings. He won't allow Horatio's "dead waste and middle of the night" to imply waist as well, though Rosencrantz and Guildenstern correspondingly dwell about Fortune's "waist, or in the middle of her favours". Nor will he permit Hamlet's "distracted globe" to mean, along with the world, his head and the globeoid theatre in which the line was spoken. This niggardliness ruins Shakespeare's triple alignment of planets in a single word, anticipating the cosmic nutshell of a later scene. Edwards is equally penurious when Hamlet labels Polonius a fishmonger, dismissing the suggestion of fleshmonger (since Polonius uses his daughter as political bait): "he means fishmonger and not something else".

The same editorial craving for what Blake called "single vision" makes Edwards intolerant of those passages which appear in the second quarto but not in the folio — among them Hamlet's excursions on osteological portraits or drunkenness in Denmark, and his rancorous soliloquy comparing himself with Fortinbras. These episodes Edwards cordons off inside square brackets, arguing that Shakespeare intended their deletion. He defends this

on all occasions", he claims, is inferior to the earlier soliloquies, though he doesn't explain why; if it's "less intricate", that's because in it Hamlet has withdrawn into generality, viewing his personal case as a metaphysical conundrum. But this habit of generalizing, acclaimed by Coleridge as the instinctive tendency of Hamlet's intelligence, is mistrusted by Edwards. The passages his brackets eliminate are always such extrapolations. He justifies the cuts he proposes in Claudius's temptation of Laertes or Hamlet's quizzing of Osric by saying that the generalities "interrupt the sweep . . . of the argument" or are "not essential to the plot". This too is to mistake the nature of *Hamlet*, in which, as in *Waiting for Godot*, interruption is a structural principle. And how can anything be judged inessential to the plot of a play which, for all its snarled and diversionary subplots, is essentially plotless.

The editorial judgments are prompted, perhaps, by Edwards's disapproval of Hamlet. His footnotes are conspicuously tetchy. He reproves Hamlet for mocking Polonius in front of "a common player", convicts him of insensitivity and cattiness towards Ophelia, finds his hectoring of Gertrude "a little disgusting" and demands whether he "has any right to be angry with Laertes" during the funeral. In fact, Edwards is berating Hamlet for infidelity to his own critical theory of the play. He believes it to be "primarily . . . religious", and wonders that, this being so, "Hamlet voices very few really Christian sentiments". The religious mission he attributes to the hero turns out to be no better than hallucination or political fanaticism. Nowadays, Edwards decides, "hearing voices from a higher world belongs mainly in the realm of abnormal psychology. Revenge may be common but it is hardly supportable."

## The onslaught on form

Howard Erskine-Hill

MARGARET ANNE DOODY  
*The Daring Muse: Augustan poetry reconsidered*  
288pp. Cambridge University Press, £27.50 (paperback, £8.95).  
052127723 X

Margaret Anne Doody paints, with broad and rapid brush, a portrait of English poetry from the political ballads of the Civil War to George Crabbe's *The Borough* (1810), "the last Augustan Georgian poem". Noting the reservations of some as to the aptness of the term "Augustan" to this era, and ignoring the attempts of others to recognize the precise uses of the term within the period itself, she applies it boldly and comprehensively to characterize a poetry of extreme formal self-consciousness, innovative mingling of genres, modes and styles, and an intentional displacement-in-process of previously dominant forms (epic, pastoral) in the production of new, spacious, unpredictable, free though not formless poems. The underlying paradigm of her discussion (debatable in regard to Jonson and Spenser) is of a poetry simple and monolithic within its genres before the Civil War, stirred up by political conflict into a conscious Restoration movement which mixed, disturbed and proliferated for over a century after. The book might have been better called *The Muddled Muse*.

It must be said at the start that this book is extremely attractive and likely to do good, while in certain respects it is somewhat perplexing. Its great virtues are enthusiasm and intelligent catholicity of taste. The design of her project prevents Professor Doody from dwelling long on any single work, but an advantage of her procedure is to set, say, *Annus Mirabilis*, *The Hind and the Panther*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, *The Village* and *The Borough* effectively side by side and mark how well each stands up to the test. Her comments on Dryden are especially well judged, not only on *The Hind and the Panther* (where Earl Miner's term "discontinuous allegory" is acknowledged as supporting her argument) but on *Abraham and Achitophel* and *Annus Mirabilis* where, to judge from her notes, she might have drawn more support

The idea of purifying violence belongs to terrorist groups." Yet hasn't Edwards, for all his judicial huffiness, outlined the latest of latterday Hamlets — a recruit to the Red Brigades, or to the ranks of a suicidal bombing squad?

The close watch Martin Dodsworth keeps on Hamlet's behaviour is also disapproving. Soulfulness is no longer the hero's romantic alibi. Dodsworth charges Hamlet with "aristocratic superciliousness" and moralistic hypocrisy, summing him up as "pathetic and appalling". The visual metaphor in Dodsworth's title gives a clue to his critical procedure: close observation was the tactic of *Scrutiny*, and Dodsworth's book has a preface by one of that periodical's erstwhile stalwarts, L.C. Knights. In accord with the practice of the Leaves, Dodsworth divests *Hamlet* of its romantic numinousness by documenting the society in which it takes place. He sees it as the analysis of a decadent cult of honour, whose dogmas he glosses by reference to sociologists like Goffman and Simmel or anthropologists like Pitt-Rivers and Mary Douglas. This weight of social precedent makes the play an ersatz novel, solidly real not theatrically chimerical, Dodsworth can therefore call the grave-digger "Tolstoyan". But Tolstoy, who so vigorously detested Shakespeare, understood the difference between novelistic truth (realism's evidence of "honesty" and "trust", the qualities Dodsworth ascribes to Shakespeare's joky artisan) and the improvised, momentary fictions of the theatre. Dodsworth simultaneously inclines towards treating the play, as Knights once recommended in his essay on *Macbeth*, as a dramatic poem. His readings are often exercises in practical criticism, deciphering speeches as if they were detachable lyrics:

This touches on a puzzle in the book as a whole, which is innocent of or ignores much of what has been written about Augustan literature during the past forty years, and seems intended to controvert an out-of-date image of it: "neo-classical . . . abstract classic dignity . . . marble cool, remote and stiff dignity . . . dull correctness". True, Doody associates this notion with what is "inculcated in schools" but it has not been inculcated by published criticism for decades. What has dominated the criticism is the concept of the rhetorical persona, able to recognize cunning subversion and energetic persuasion in about equal measure. Maynard Mack published "The Muse of Satire" in 1951 and W. B. Ewald *The Masks of Swift* in 1953. Though not mentioned in *The Daring Muse* they powerfully contributed to the analysis of different voices and styles in Augustan poetry, which is the kind of criticism offered here. Doody's term "ventriloquism" is an attractive modification, but only a modification, of a well-understood critical approach. Again, she seems in harmony with published criticism on the exploratory and dramatic nature of Rochester's poetry, but no references appear in her notes. Her very welcome appreciation of the coherence and conclusion of *Abraham and Achitophel* is still not a widespread view: it would have been gracious to have acknowledged that Beroard Schilling's *Dryden and the Conservative Myth* (1961) anticipated her. She argues that Gay's poetry and *Beggar's Opera* are witty, parodic, stylistically self-conscious, mingling several genres, and thus (in her argument) "a key to all the literature of the Augustan period". Her view of Gay's drama itself was anticipated in 1976 and 1977 by P. B. Lewis and the present reviewer. The latter also wrote, in a collection of essays on Pope published in 1978, that "the unique form of *The Dunciad* is its precariously creative synthesis of forms", which is close to if not identical with the emphasis of Doody's present "reconsideration".

It seems possible that Doody originally intended to write a primer rather than a regular work of scholarly criticism and that this explains her odd lack of relation with the secondary literature, which would often have helped her ground and substantiate her points. Critics and scholars of the period should not feel plucked to find their published arguments synthesized with so little acknowledgement.

hence his deft account of the "extraordinary poetry" in Ophelia's description of Hamlet's posture when he invades her room, or his subtle attention to the rhythmic stresses which manifest Hamlet's obscene pleasure in dispatching Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as he tells the story to Horatio. The tone throughout is the starchy sceptical, bossily prescriptive one perfected by the Leaves. Of Hamlet's intermittent Senecan stolidism, Dodsworth remarks "No one, properly speaking, is like him".

At his best, he relaxes his methodical scrutiny's invigilation of morals and responds to the vagrancy and baphazard energy of the play. He calls it "opaline" and "rhapsodic", as widely undirected as Hamlet's mind; he characterizes the entire fourth act as an "extravaganza" or "fantasia", in which "no direct course of events is followed", and is perceptive, too, about the third act's compilation of playlets, whose function intensity proves futile — "the meeting of Hamlet and Ophelia staged by Polonius, the play staged by Hamlet, the histories of the closet scene, for which Gertrude is the intended audience".

The reckless instability Dodsworth detects, though it offends the rigour of his critical manner, is what makes *Hamlet* so inextricably and so insoulful. Edwards believes that it doesn't fit the theatre, where it can only be accommodated after many textual nips and tucks. On the contrary, *Hamlet* is the theatre — a treatise on the deceitful illusionism and vertiginous richness of its own art. Actors, unconcerned with strict semantic truth and prepared to try out any meaning which is playable, may well have understood it better than all the editors and literary critics who have tried to worry it into order.

*The Daring Muse* has made good use of these.

Though not substantially original, the book is effective in its reformulations and does achieve its own emphasis. Doody's chapter "The new Augustans and the Roman poet" is admirably open-minded and judicious, quoting Philip Francis on Horace's "Life and Spirit of a mind in action", and relevantly noting the "extreme literary self-consciousness" of the sermon. Here she strikes her keynote; and it may be thought that her constant pursuit of formal combination and generic displacement throughout the book is a trifle relentless. Yet having already denied the validity of the pastoral genre, Doody remarks, "there was no need for Crabbe's onslaught on pastoral poetry at the beginning of *The Village*, except that Crabbe needed, in the Augustan manner, to defy a genre at the outset of his poem". Can we imagine the young Crabbe sitting down to get his generic displacement right? He is most likely to have been working for a strong contrast between bland literary elegance and the actual hardship of the rural poor he knew. *The Daring Muse* nudges discussion of Augustan poetry in a formalistic direction, and there are few parallels in these pages with those who, while recognizing literary innovation, have also been concerned with the relation of literature to the world beyond books. There are times, indeed, when the author seems to tread on the brink of deconstruction; awareness of the formal self-consciousness, then, questioning, of a text often precludes the suggestion that it subverts its own identity. Professor Doody is (occasionally) too intelligent to twist into that solipsistic spiral. At such moments she always moves off to another poem — or another picture.

It is with pictures that *The Daring Muse* tends, if not often to the world beyond the book, at least to a world beyond the text. It shows an admirable interest in the appearance of Augustan poetry in its original published form and uses its own twenty-eight well-chosen illustrations to display how Augustan poetry was read in modern editions and anthologies. It is a very real aid to feeling our way into the poems, as the Hamilton and Thomson place to Thomson's "Hymn to the Scepter" and the Reeper's "Returning Home" demonstrate.

## Memoirs of an intellectual fidget

Frederic Raphael

DONALD GALLUP (Editor)  
*The Journals of Thornton Wilder 1939-1961*  
354pp. Yale University Press, £22.  
030033753

Thornton Wilder was, as the cant has it, a one-off. The only Pulitzer Prize-winner for both fiction and theatre, he achieved early popularity with *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and consolidated it with the folksy experimentalism of *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth* (by far the better play). He was also an intellectual, a penitential visiting professor, but never a full-blown academic. His characteristic resting place seems to have been between two stools. Well-read in several languages, he was evidently a lively, opinionated talker, sans complexes when it came to big issues or big names (his put-downs of Gide and Faulkner are unmissably mordant). The climax, or climacteric, of his career as a literary pundit came with an invitation to deliver the Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1950-51. He was no stranger to the podium, being much solicited and finding it hard to say no. (It may or may not be significant that, among his *obiter dicta*, he attributes to the homosexual a chronic need to be propositioned.) In the event, Harvard made more demands on him than he could well meet. He took exaggerated pains over the preparation of his material, on "The American Literary Heritage", but lecturing alarmed him. "If one had really good ideas," he remarks, "that would be the worst use one could put them to, and so I suffered was partly psychic, partly physical: he undertook an additional undergraduate course, after the death of F. O. Matthiessen, and was exhausted by the combined demands.

## Brecht at close quarters

Philip Brady

WALTER BRECHT  
*Unter Leben in Augsburg, damals*  
367pp. Frankfurt: Insel.  
3438147758  
HANS BUNGE (Editor)  
*Brecht's Letters: Einführung und Notizen von Ruth Berlau*  
320pp. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.  
317286012

In a poem by Brecht an unnamed speaker engages an unnamed newcomer to the big city: "cover your tracks" — in other words, cultivate anonymity, give nothing away. Brecht seems to have heeded his own advice; he does not actually obscure his origins, but he reveals very little. The journals are not confessional, the poetry, when it seems to be creating a kind of autobiographical record, is in truth serving other purposes, highlighting what is symptomatic and underplaying what is unique and personal.

Brecht's biographers have, therefore, had to be delectable — James K. Lyon on the years in America, David Pike on the Moscow connection. And always it has been the members of Brecht's own circle, speaking up where Brecht was silent, who have filled out the picture. One of the first was Hanns Eisler, and Hans Bunge, who persuaded Eisler to talk freely, succeeded not long ago in 1959 in breaking down the natural reticence of Ruth Berlau in a series of conversations which form the core of her reminiscences. Finally published eleven years after her death, and now, following those covered by Bunge back then, Eisler, Berlau or any other, could, Brecht's brother Walter, perhaps by some two years, has added his own, very different voice to the chorus of recollections.

Walter Brecht is telling a straightforward, unadorned story of life in Augsburg. He has no ulterior secrets to reveal and he eschews the night, keeping in fact close to what is in his mind. The younger brother's slightly mysti-

cal Cambridge fiasco, as his admired Stendhal might have termed it, inflicted an obscure hurt (Henry James too was a familiar spirit) and Wilder appears never fully to have recovered. He published two more novels, neither of them as accessibly innovative as *The Ides of March* (1948), and revised *The Merchant of Yonkers* into *The Matchmaker*, whence was derived *Helio, Dolly!*, but he became increasingly stalled among projects he never finished or might better never have started. *The Emporium*, of which we have two lame scenes here, was conceived as a homage to Kafka's *The Castle*, as its incomplete state suggests.

His *Journal* was perhaps a way of keeping busy without having to face critics or the public; so far from being an uninhibited private record, its sententious garrulity suggests a man of philosophical temper and literary curiosity who despairs of arriving at publishable conclusions. Wilder's sister, in an affectionate but slightly unreliable introduction (*The Woman of Andros* is not set on "the Greek island of that name"), tells of coming downstairs at night to find her brother in the library. "Thornton", she said, "is there anything you want?" "No", he answered, "I'm just looking — looking for a book that hasn't been written." In view of the *fausses couches* listed here, the missing volume may well have been one of his own.

The lineaments of Dr Casaubon were perhaps always present. Wilder was a compulsive compiler of *fichiers*. If his finished work was often cannily terse, his researches into Lope de Vega (whose myriad plays he was determined to tabulate chronologically) and *Planchette* (which filled thousands of pages, and many weeks, with no palpable results. Joyce's example may be responsible for a belief that the Big Subject had to be Everyman, a dubious proposition without ever yielding the universal. Books, rather than life itself, stimulated his

inspiration: his second novel, *The Cabala*, is Proustian and the characters of Doña Clara and Doña Maria, in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, are clearly founded on Madame de Sévigné and her overestimated daughter, about whom he is still writing almost thirty years later. These *Journals*, sourly construed, could be said to be those of an intellectual fidget, unduly given to self-exhortation in the style of James's "à l'oeuvre, mon bon", and to lucubrations of questionable value:

The position that man is incurably wicked and can only be saved by supernatural intervention may well be taken as a complete negation unless the doctrine of supernatural intervention be seen as an indirect symbolic statement of an element in human nature itself equally interpretable as purely human activity for finding his subjective and his social harmony.

Since the editor, Donald Gallup, declares that he has cut the entries by two-thirds, it is sometimes hard to imagine what he has spared us. However, one fears that the omission of "passages of introspection and self-analysis, including dreams" may have excised material germane to getting a fix on Wilder's elusive character. Given the relevance of dreams to his dramatic method, the personae (and plots) of his unwieldy reveries might be of more than casual interest. As it is, we are victims of a double vigilance: the author himself decided that his *Journal* should contain no

descriptions of the Holy Week ceremonies at Valladolid; no account of the conversations with the Max Beerhohns; of the weekend at Nottley (Abbey, home of the then Oliviers) and the parties at Sihyl (Colefax's . . . I am able to guard myself against writing here for "show", for parade, for "audience").

In view of the quality of the anecdote which slip through his self-denying blockade, this general rigour is to be deplored. If we could do without those subtle reservations about narrative method in *The Wings of the Dove*, what could be more delicious than the story of

André Gide asking a rich young man to lunch and then (since avarice, not lust, was his abiding sin) foisting the bill on his guest, with the womanish excuse, "C'est plus fort que moi?"

There are some excellent epigrams ("Success is paralyzing only to those who have never wished for anything else") and some that are less than excellent ("Conjunctions are the sinews of prose, or its wheels"), and many passages of shrewd and unpretentious intelligence, but it cannot be said that these *Journals* sustain the level of, say, Henry de Montherlant's *Carnets* or even Gide's own disingenuous *Journal*. Perhaps it is simply that Wilder winced too much at his own reflections to make a neat Narcissus. He declares that his pages are meant only to serve as "school of writing, as *four* — oven, furnace". But doesn't the notion that they were never intended for publication founder on that translation of "four"? It can scarcely have been done for his own benefit. He might have written better for himself if he had faced candidly that no writer composes *in vacuo* and that he nearly always writes better if he admits it. Lack of style is not evidence of a private language.

The editing is punctilious, but peccable. "Il pauvre" is painful and I doubt if "Estrogon" is, as Mr Gallup suggests, a misprint for "Estro-maduro". Since Wilder was on a trip to Málaga at the time of the entry, "Estepona" seems a likelier reading. Equally, "Alhambra Hotel" should surely be "Alhambra Palace Hotel", where the musicians waiting to Chopin in order to gratify the visiting Stravinsky. Several rather odd locutions pass without editorial sanction, which avoids a plethora of pedantic (sic) but excites uncertainty about the quality of the transcription. The *Journals* are of once tiresome and stimulating; it is an odd experience to be both bored and exhilarated by the same volume, but Wilder's ambiguous nature might have relished the idea of startling a reader to sleep.

photographic documentation of Berliner Ensemble productions yielded a unique record. How far her work extended, how much Brecht depended on her, is now clear for the first time. And how much she depended on Brecht is clearer still — appallingly clear.

It was indeed never a simple working relationship; relationships with Brecht rarely were simple. Far more was involved for her than devoted service — "I have told a love-story" is her own verdict, but it is a far from uplifting love-story. Brecht rewarded her devotion by exploiting her. Transfigured into the Lal-Tu figure in Brecht's *Me-Ti*, she is offered cold comfort: "your goodness is recognized and esteemed by being put to use. Thus the apple gains fame by being eaten." And she never forgave that brisk entry in Brecht's diary: "Ruth has had an operation." In fact she had given birth (Brecht was the father) and the child died.

Criticism is, however, muted and, remarkably, it is never turned on the one woman whom Brecht would not, indeed could not, leave — Helene Weigel. Berlau's admiration for Weigel was uniquely important (useful might, alas, be nearer the truth), but Berlau was herself unwilling, and probably unable, to live without Brecht — in letters to him she frequently signed herself "Your creature". After the war she followed Brecht to Berlin, where she was increasingly not so much exploited as under-used. She was soon not even playing second fiddle. "I have learned", she wrote in 1952 to the publisher Peter Suhrkamp, "to play fifth violin for Brecht." After Brecht's death — and Hans Bunge's postscript is essential to the story — she became pathetically isolated, fiercely loyal to her memories.

Among the manuscripts of this "human volcano", as Bunge calls her, was a sheet of poems, dated January 1951. These included one that has hitherto been attributed to Brecht. Perhaps Berlau wrote it — she certainly had good reason to do so:

Fräulein  
You had none  
I had one  
I loved.



Brecht and Ruth Berlau in 1935, reproduced from Brecht's Lal-Tu, reviewed here.

fied view of his gifted, somewhat enigmatic elder. Their two worlds are contiguous but they do not interact and Bertolt — Eugen as he then was — is a fitful presence in an anecdotal story; he is distant, superior, self-willed and proud; he is clique of male friends clearly made a vivid impression on Walter, whereas the procession of female friends, with Mariangela Zoff taking over from Paula Banholzer, left him bemused.

Ruth Berlau came on the tangled scene later, and stayed. When she met Brecht in 1935 she was already a Communist. "Red Ruth", as her friends called her, had cycled alone from Copenhagen to Moscow in 1930 to see the New Age for herself ("It wasn't all that far", she recalls). Later she translated some of

Brecht's plays and poems into her native Danish and she became one of Brecht's three principal women collaborators, working with him on nine plays in all. And she was — the many photographs in this volume are a vivid record in themselves — exceptionally beautiful.

To work with Brecht you needed — as the first of his collaborators, Elisabeth Hauptmann, once observed to Ruth Berlau — at least twenty-four hours a day. Some of the tasks were menial, checking references, copying and filing — but others were creative — she was responsible for the publication of Brecht's *Svendborg Poems*; and her translations and productions of his plays were of incalculable value to Brecht at a time when German productions were all but impossible. Later, her



# Rat race and Superman

Pietro Corsi

MARY MIDGLEY  
*Evolution as a Religion: Strange hopes and stranger fears*  
180pp. Methuen. £12.95 (paperback, £4.95).  
0416 39650 X

There is no doubt that sometimes a title can powerfully condition the reading of a book. This is particularly true with respect to Mary Midgley's provocative essay, *Evolution as a Religion*. On noticing the title, not a few contemporary students of evolution will jump out of their chairs; but they should not really do so. Indeed, the book is not about the vast, complex and highly diversified enterprise we call "evolutionary biology", and one suspects that the choice of the title had something to do with the needs of the American market, and the recent, unfortunate creationist controversy.

The target of Midgley's stringent and morally intense criticism is two basic ideas she feels are still powerfully influential among contemporary biologists, and even more so among popularizers of the discipline: Social Darwinism, and what she calls "The Escalator Fallacy". Passing reference is made to the first topic, but the long string of short chapters really only tackles the second one, with the intention of unmasking fallacies and naiveties in the statements of those molecular biologists and geneticists who believe in utopian manipulation and selection of human genes. It is therefore fair to contemporary evolutionary biology to stress that this book is only concerned with a particular, well-defined, highly controversial and highly criticized group of scientists and popularizers who dream of Superman, and transplant old-fashioned, quasi-phrenological views of mental and moral processes and qualities into the language of modern genetics. For many of these utopian geneticists, speculation on the future of humanity, on "how we will

look" when appropriate genetic engineering has been performed, has indeed all the features of a religious belief, with rather unpleasant sides attached to it.

This said, it is clear that what Midgley is discussing is not "evolution", but a particular feature of debates about molecular biology and human genetics that few evolutionary biologists will consider as part of their concerns or priorities. When confronted with unpleasant conclusions drawn by some from what was then called "the scientific advance", early Victorian naturalist-parsons pointed out that a little science is worse than no science at all. What they meant was that full acquaintance with the actual state of affairs in geology or biology was the only effective tool to unmask the ulterior motives of the "demagogues" who used a simplified version of scientific hypothesis and theories to talk about their social and political aspirations or fears.

To some extent, Midgley tries to follow their example, and writes convincingly against the naive assumption that there is a clearly proved, one-to-one relationship between single genes and mental qualities like intelligence, or moral ones like altruism. She also points out that very little is known about the process of individual development, and the jump from genes to individuals, let alone to personality and culture, is the fulfilment of a wish more than an argument. Yet, she also appears to take for granted — for "scientific" — ideas and concepts which are not, or are no longer, acknowledged in the intellectual equipment of evolutionary biology.

Following a classic simplification of complex historiographical issues, the author attributes to Lamarck the idea of a great escalator of life, leading necessarily to man and upwards, and argues that this assumption is still embedded in the minds of evolutionary biologists. In the early nineteenth century, and well before Herbert Spencer or Teilhard de Chardin, the idea that life progressed from monad to man, and that man was a transitory step towards

angels, was indeed shared by naturalists and a few theologians. The famous Scottish divine Thomas Chalmers did not see why man should not move up to near-angel status. It is doubtful, however, that this was the view of Lamarck, and it is certainly not the view of contemporary evolutionary biologists.

When deploying her strategy of using science against scientists in order to question Social Darwinism, the author tends to be carried away by her abhorrence of the doctrine. Midgley appears to believe that Huxley endorsed cut-throat competition because "he was not a naturalist. (His first ambition in life had been to be an engineer.)" Darwin, however, refused to embrace the early forms of Social Darwinism "because he was a serious, full-time naturalist". Michael Ghiselin's gloomy view of nature and society as dominated by violent competition is declared to be "pure phantasy", since it does not take into account the several instances where co-operation is a means of survival far more effective than selfish behaviour. There is, in other words, the tendency to divide views into bad, ideologically motivated science and pure science, the latter being unresponsive to all that our ethical preconceptions condemn. In doing so, Midgley accepts a simplified view of evolutionary biology which at times emerges in the writing of sociobiologists and utopian geneticists, and does not see that a documented rehearsal of the very complexity of the topic would disqualify the claims of many gloomy preachers and prophets, who would like us to believe that one or two broad categories are capable of explaining all natural and social phenomena.

Students of the historical development of evolutionary biology, or readers of recent, fascinating controversies on sociobiology, on the theory of punctuated equilibrium, or other, more "technical" aspects of embryology, molecular biology, the neurosciences, and so on, are well aware that "evolution" is a shorthand and often highly misleading term em-

ployed to denote a lively, pluralistic, intensely researched field of science. Polemicists, political scientists or politically motivated religiousists and a few biologists have shown a predilection to forget this important characteristic. Though it would be wrong to claim the broader philosophical or political preoccupations have nothing to do with actual scientific research, it is equally true that even disciplines like biology, traditionally characterized by frequent use of political or social metaphors, have now reached such a level of complexity, of technical and problematic articulation, that they can no longer be approached with simple and schematic epistemological or critical tools. The crude over-simplifications of some sociobiologists and utopian geneticists are better fought by reminding them of the actual size and dimension of the problems they claim to solve, than by contesting the morality of their conclusions. This is not to deny that there is ample scope for the evaluation of the political and philosophical presuppositions and implications of the debate on sociobiology or human genetic engineering. It is in this respect that *Evolution as a Religion* offers interesting insights and reflections.

The biologists and social-biologists selected for detailed criticism in this book (from Edward O. Wilson to Richard Dawkins and Ghiselin) appear to share views of nature, society and culture contrary to many of the ethical assumptions which are intensely felt by the author. Against the dreams of Superman, but in a distant mental future, Mary Midgley poses the threat of nuclear and ecological catastrophe, and of today's violence and oppression. She has claims to put forward on behalf of those who are not convinced that unbridled self-interest is the only key to explain every behaviour, and she speaks of man's duty towards nature and its inhabitants. There is no doubt many will share her views, and will appreciate, as I do, the honesty of her declarations, and the unpretentious yet high moral tone of her prose.

that science and religion have often been in fruitful harmony, rather than in conflict. What one can question are Russell's frequent assumptions that the intellectual presuppositions of scientific enquiry demand a biblical backing. One can suppose these presuppositions (epistemologically, belief in a rationally ordered cosmos) to be capable of pragmatic, internal justification. One can also wonder whether pointing to the mysteries of theology, and particularly of God's relationship to the world, really makes them clearer or better-supported.

For the universe to exist at all it must have a minimal order. To be an object of human knowledge it must be yet further ordered. The kind of order it does have may have long been hidden by philosophies which biblical Christianity had a hand in overthrowing. Whether Christianity is thus revealed as an essential underpinning of science is open to question. Science has successfully survived transitions to cultures where a biblical faith is not dominant. Some elements in the presuppositions of science, e.g. the belief that regularity in nature can be expressed quantitatively, seem unconnected to any biblical foundation. Confirmation that a great variety of theological belief may co-exist with science comes from considering the case of Newton, whose religion Russell leaves unexplored. Study of Newton's religious manuscripts shows that, for all his interest in biblical prophecy, he had a faith which was neither truly Christian nor biblical. It was closer to a deists' belief in a universal religion, which Newton traces back to the ancient veneration of sacred fire and sun as images of God.

Lurking behind Colla A. Russell's claim of "no science without Christian faith" is perhaps the belief that without a divine guarantee of order, we might have to accept that science is temporally and locally limited. If, as it can get by with this limited divine order, we shall probably also think, as Hugh Montefiore, that we need discover overall purposes behind the evolution of the world and that the evolution of the world is a purpose behind the world as we find it.

# Mathematical progressions

Jorge Calado

LEWIS PYENSON  
*The Young Einstein: The advent of relativity*  
255pp. Bristol: Adam Hilger. £19.95.  
085274 7799

This excellent book is less about the young Einstein than about the debate, in Wilhelmine Germany, on the role of mathematics in the successful pursuit of physics. Although we are told a lot about Einstein's family background and early moves, we learn much more about how pure mathematics, through the *Gymnasium* and *Oberlehrer* network, came to dominate German education at the end of the nineteenth century. Old beliefs die hard. Latin and Greek may have been demoted from their pre-eminent position in the educational system by the forces of industrialization to become, in Ernst Mach's words, "simply two objects, among others, for archaeological and historical research". They were, however, replaced by another classical structure, that of pure mathematics, which soon imposed a new order on physical phenomena. For mathematicians like Weyl, pure mathematics and reality formed "an inseparable, theoretical whole". And Weyl's mentor, Hilbert, saw physics as disciplined by geometry, stating that "above all we must strive to create in mechanics a complete, axiomatised, mathematical science".

Mathematicians held the day and physics was thought too important to be left to physicists. This order of things was in line with a classical view of nature, framed by symmetries and other unifying schemes, which had recovered the old Leibnizian idea of a pre-established harmony between mathematics and the world of experience. It is also a theme that Lewis Pyenson has developed in *Neohumanism and the Persistence of Pure Mathematics in Wilhelmine Germany* (1983) and which he again brilliantly argues in the middle section of *The Young Einstein*.

In the works and words of theoretical physicists like Mach and Boltzmann, traditional physics became respectably "classical", an attribute which has lasted till the present day. But physicists in general "believed that mathematics had only incidental value in constructing physical theories". The views of Dreyer, generously quoted by Dr Pyenson, are typical of this uneasiness; he denounced the "real danger to the application of mathematics" and "their rigid formalism". By 1930

Musil could write (in *The Man Without Qualities*) that "mathematics has entered like a daemon into all aspects of our life".

In this debate, Einstein's theories of relativity provided a fascinating case study. Relativity offered an open invitation for successive reinterpretation and unifications by physicists and mathematicians alike. None was better than Minkowski, Einstein's mathematics teacher at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, and the creator of four-dimensional spacetime. Minkowski held an unshakeable belief in the glory of mathematics and in the ability of the mathematician to "do something of practical value, and something better than to determine the motion of tops". He spoke of physicists "laboriously carving a path through a primeval forest of obscurity" while "the mathematician travels nearby on an excellently designed road", and he extolled, again and again, the achievements of mathematicians who "to the boundless astonishment of the rest of mankind . . . have created purely within their imagination a grand domain that should have arrived at a real and most perfect existence".

As Pyenson points out, "Minkowski's physics was the prism through which many researchers saw Einstein's special theory of relativity in the late Wilhelmine period". However, Minkowski's views were not shared by Einstein, for whom physical reasoning always took precedence over mathematical manipulation. On his struggle with a particular problem, Einstein once remarked: "I'm afraid I'm wrong again. I can't put my theory in words. I can only formulate it mathematically and that's suspicious."

Striding across the two styles and the two physics — the classical and the modern — was Planck, the editor of the prestigious and influential *Annalen der Physik*, acting as a "gatekeeper". He opened physics to the world of the quantum, was a defender of the relativity theories, but remained distrustful of mathematical elegance as a way to refashion old subjects. "All physical questions are decided not by aesthetic points of view but by experiments", he proclaimed. Pyenson is, again, very perceptive in discussing the role of the *Annalen* in the dissemination of Einstein's theories.

Later, of course, Einstein came to accept the

power of pure mathematics in determining physical meaning, but still cautioned that "experience remained . . . the sole criterion of the physical utility of a mathematical construction". As the offspring of a family of industrialists and inventors, he was the true son of experience. His uncle Jakob patented several electric devices, among them the Einstein-Kornprobst electricity meter which involved a pendulum clock whose rate had to be counted against a standard clock. The measurement of time in moving frames of reference, the concepts of synchronicity and simultaneity, are the seeds of the special theory of relativity. Dr Pyenson is careful not to make too much of these coincidences, but as Einstein himself noted, it is "the inconsistent, the droll, even the insane, which nature, inexhaustibly operative, implements in an individual". The world came to know him as a simple rebel who often wore shoes without socks and liked the feel of leather. How wonderfully ironic that he should have created, in the words of Chandrasekhar, the Nobel Prize winner for Physics in 1983, "the most beautiful theory that ever was".

# Antibiotics pioneering

Alan Saunders

RONALD W. CLARK  
*The Life of Ernst Chain: Penicillin and beyond*  
217pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.  
0297 787004

Ask the man in the street to say who discovered penicillin and as like as not he will answer with the one name of Alexander Fleming. Only in recent years has scholarly endeavour begun to disturb this popular image of splendid solitude: we hear less of lonely dedication, more of concerted teamwork, and Fleming is made to share the limelight, as he shared the Nobel Prize, with Howard Florey and Ernst Boris Chain.

Florey and Fleming have already received outboarded biographical treatment from Trevor Williams and Gwyn Macfarlane; now Ronald W. Clark has completed the picture with a life of Chain. It is very much a twentieth-century life, crossing both national and disciplinary borders, from Nazi Germany to Britain and from biochemistry to pathology. The latter translation seems to have been the easier of the two; the looser, highly cultivated young German

Jew was to know many dark months of fear, hypochondria and depression in the smug Britain of Stanley Baldwin.

At Oxford, working under Florey, Chain read the paper in which Fleming described a strange new substance of extraordinary antibacterial powers but great instability. Like Fleming though, he was more interested in the scientific questions that penicillin posed than in its therapeutic potential (which at first seemed slight). Chain's task was to isolate penicillin's anti-bacterial properties, Florey's to study their pharmacological implications. By May 1940 they had on their hands something that was stable, non-toxic and powerfully antibacterial. Chain, said an observer, "was beside himself with excitement".

Years later, Chain was to write impatiently of the amateur spirit of British science, with its disdain of costly equipment and industrial techniques. (He knew that they ordered these things differently to his native land.) He had had to watch his adopted country, to which he was deeply loyal, paying millions of dollars to American pharmaceutical firms that had patented methods of penicillin production.

Clark suggests that the experience profoundly influenced Chain's career and,

through it, the development of the British antibiotics industry. He is very good at counterpointing these two themes and always careful to tell us not only what was done but how it was paid for. As he follows Chain from the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome to the new chair of Biochemistry at Imperial College, London, the financial and administrative theme begins to predominate; Chain, says Clark, "came to typify the new triangular relationship which in the post-war years developed, if only slowly, between the academic world, government departments and some of Britain's major industries". Too acerbic, perhaps, to be one of the great and the good, he was none the less a scientific statesman and entrepreneur of international authority.

Clark conducts us through these years with great skill, and he can tell a scientific story with some lucidity. Chain himself, however, especially the lost, lonely Chain of the early *émigré* years, remains a somewhat distant figure. Perhaps on this subject no more can be told than Ronald W. Clark tells us, but as his book is quite without references or adequate bibliography, it is difficult to say whether we may ever hope for an account more definitive than this.

# Questionable assurances

Peter Byrne

HUGH MONTEFIORE  
*The Probability of God*  
195pp. SCM. £6.95.  
0334 022672  
COLINA A. RUSSELL  
*Cross-Currents: Interactions between science and faith*  
272pp. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press. £8.95.  
0851107516

Hugh Montefiore's intention in *The Probability of God* is to restate the argument from design as a strong one for the truth of theism. He endeavours to do so by arguing against the impression that modern science has made appeal to a designing creator redundant and against the conclusion that modern philosophy after Hume has shown the appeal to be intellectually inadmissible.

In attempting to overturn the common view of science and design, theology, the Bishop of Birmingham does not revert to the notion that individual parts of the natural world display design through adaptation, nor does he deny that species are the products of evolutionary transformation. He argues, rather, that the entire history of the evolving universe, from Big Bang to the emergence of *homo sapiens*, displays evident purpose, most probably, because most simply, explained through the directing hand of deity. This purpose reveals itself first in the apparent direction to the history: from primeval nucleus to an environment with conscious intelligent creatures. Purpose is also displayed in that otherwise the cosmos would have had to rely upon the most improbable conjunction of coincidences for such direction to be maintained. Very large parts of the book are devoted to a simple mode of argument: retelling crucial facts in the evolution of the cosmos and life which, had they been but marginally different, would not have sustained the direction the Bishop sees.

One of the major weaknesses in such an appeal to science to support a purpose be-

hind cosmic and evolutionary history is the frequency with which naturalists' details of purpose, in explaining apparently directional change, are labelled as depending upon chance or randomness. Much more thought needs to be given to the sense in which a non-theistic cosmological history relies upon chance. For example, even a neo-Darwinian account of a piece of biological evolution does not deny that the relevant events are causally explicable and the end-state intelligible in its context. Thus: genetic novelty is caused by the chemistry of reproduction (and only undetermined to the extent that the indeterminism of the subatomic influences it); the state of the relevant environment is likewise causally explicable, as is the process whereby that environment selects novelty. The randomness here seems largely to consist of two things: lack of any evident purpose in the production of novelty, and the independence of the production of novelty and the state of the environment in which the species is set (there being no apparent way in which the environment calls forth genetic novelty; nor apparent purpose behind the matching of novelty and specific environment).

Such a naturalistic account reveals the history of evolution to be a history in a deep sense. Events take place which are intelligible and caused, but they are the product of independent causal chains and therefore produce sequences which are neither necessary, repeatable nor predictable. This kind of randomness is, of course, the stuff of which human history is made, and we are familiar therefore with the idea of sequences which are antecedently unlikely (considered from an a priori viewpoint) but which have none the less most definitely occurred. The naturalist is bidding us to accept that the story of cosmological and biological change is a history in this deep sense, whilst offering in return to make particular events in this history intelligible in their context.

The important question in relation to this history intelligible in their context is not whether retelling many individual facts makes the alternative of design seem more appealing, but whether the naturalistic approach illuminates

ates the study of nature better. And here we can point to much on the naturalists' side: for example, Darwinian ideas have proved immensely fruitful beyond the evidence they were designed to fit. They have given birth to whole new disciplines and new theories and hypotheses that are independently testable. This form of naturalism is not a dogma but a well-proven scientific research programme. It remains to be seen if the alternative to naturalism, that inorganic and organic matter have in-built tendencies reflecting the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and making them co-operate in the working out of a grand design, has more fruitful results in the study of nature.

The "theistic hypothesis" could be fruitful in this respect only if it had a clear content and explanatory power. It is in dealing with the philosophical objections on this score that Bishop Montefiore is at his weakest. Among many points we may list the following: the naïveté of the principle of sufficient reason in Chapter Two; the refusal to consider how the necessary being arrived at by that principle can later be employed to explain contingent order and history in what follows; the over-appeal to an undefined "simplicity" as the mark of adequacy in explanation; the blindness to J. L. Mackie's point that it is not a simple explanation to cite the intentions of a disembodied spirit as "causes" of material changes and conditions; the bald statement (p. 98) that science "only deals in 'How' and not 'Why' questions".

*The Probability of God* will not convince one who is sceptical of natural theology on philosophical grounds. The book does two things of value: it highlights many of the tasks a naturalistic understanding of evolutionary history has still to tackle; and it points to a theological response to the work of Don Cupitt.

Further evidence of that reaction can be found in Colla A. Russell's *Cross-Currents: Interactions between science and faith*. This is a very accessible presentation of scientific history designed to bring out the well-known thesis that Christian belief has been a formative factor in the rise of modern science. One cannot doubt reading Professor Russell's book

# NEW IN LITERATURE

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SANDER L. GILMAN

Gilman's fascinating and moving book identifies a demon of the Jewish past; beyond that, it may help to exorcise it. —Guy Stern, Wayne State University

In a provocative and unsettling study of assimilation and identity, Sander Gilman examines the historiography of Jewish self-hatred. With intertidal skill he traces the responses of generations of Jewish writers to the fear that they are unable to command the language of the larger society in which they live. No matter what their discourse, they fear that their language is somehow different, tainted, Jewish. Behind their self-hatred lies the myth of the Jew's hidden language.

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**BROWNING'S DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES AND THE POST-ROMANTIC SUBJECT**  
LOI D. MARTIN

For the Victorians, Martin argues, the dramatic monologue represented both a delicate acceptance and a rejection of "the eutonymy of the individual as constitutor of meaning." Springing from the conflict between the desire for subjective unity in speech and the inevitably fragmentary nature of speech itself, the dramatic monologue provides a way of viewing a larger cultural and artistic dilemma: the instability of the individual in relation to both product and market, artifact and readership.

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# Animal economies

Maureen McCulloch

WILLIAM WOODRUFF  
Paradise Galore  
Illustrated by David Farris  
165pp. Dent. £6.95.  
0460 061674

Are the authors of children's books trying to spare the children the full horrors of the modern world, or are they themselves ashamed to admit to the systematic cruelty of agriculture today, when they portray pig farms as places where pigs can gather convivially to discuss important issues, rather than as the factory prisons which the majority are? Perhaps it is just to allow the pigs a chance of escape and adventure. William Woodruff, a professor of Economics, writing here for children for the first time, does not address the specific question of man's inhumanity to pigs (apart from his eating them) preferring to tackle the problem of men's inhumanity to man.

Walter, the young pig-hero of *Paradise Galore*, is too impatient to wait for his turn to board the farm cart for the journey to the Happy Land (where there is bread and jam three times a day, and from which no pig has ever returned), so he sets off, through the fence, in search of Paradise—and finds himself in Wonderland. Joined by a camel, Ali, and a donkey, Ding Dong, he arrives, by way of a door marked "Enter" and a long, dark tunnel, in a series of strange lands, in which the animal inhabitants have organized themselves in different ways.

The first land is peopled by officious ostriches and other birds intent on ensuring that everything is done the Right Way ("It's

quite remarkable what the wearing of school ties has done to improve manners in the aquarium"). Dissidents are turned into glue. Walter and his companions flee the pot to Baboonland, which is under the sway of Bungo and the red (literally, having been dipped in paint) army. Saved from death because a friendly rat eats their sentences, the trio assist in the rats' rebellion against the baboons, expose Bungo as an imposter, and escape by balloon, only to find themselves in the realm of another despot, the one-eyed bat.

Where the estriches may have been well-intentioned and the baboons simply stupid, the bat is cruel, changing animals into stone for fun and into mice for food. Walter rises to the challenge, fights and slays the bat and releases the land from its enchantment, whereupon Matilda the Mouse, their guide from Baboonland, turns back into a comely pig.

The four travel on together through more lands and adventures until Walter, finally apprised of the real nature of the Happy Land, reconciles himself to his orphan state and settles for life with Matilda and a herd of wild boar as being the nearest he is likely to get to Paradise.

Professor Woodruff spins his yarn too loosely, so that the story is, at times, unnecessarily complicated and repetitive, but he decorates the tale with such wonderfully absurd images (such as the course of correction for those sentenced to be ostriched, which involves learning to sit, to get up and to dance like an ostrich; or the conveyor and vat system for painting the inhabitants of Baboonland different colours according to class) and the characters of Walter and Ali are so engaging that the book is well worth reading, as indeed it would be for David Farris's illustrations alone.

## A variety of voices

Lachlan Mackinnon

PHILIPPA PEARCE  
Lion at School and Other Stories  
112pp. Viking Kestrel. £5.50.  
0670 803919

The stories in Philippa Pearce's collection take two forms: most are shaped as journeys, beginning and ending at home, but the rest pose problems which have to be, and are, resolved. The structural simplicity makes the stories ideal for reading aloud. Philippa Pearce is quoted in the blurb as seeing herself writing in "the oral tradition", and she surmounts the implicit paradox with ease.

"Lion at School" itself shows a childlike credulity towards its subject which is engaging. Betty Small is on her way to school when she meets a lion who insists on accompanying her. The teacher tells her that "You know you are not allowed to bring pets to school." Betty replies that the lion, now ominously swishing his tail, is not a pet but a friend. He behaves himself, but in playtime is puzzled why he and Betty don't play like the rest. She is afraid of the larger boys, she explains, particularly Jack Tall, who sometimes knocks her over deliberately. (Caroline Sharpe's illustration at this point, of Betty crossing one ankle over the other and tucking her chin in above folded arms while nestling against the cheery but concerned lion, is beautifully and characteristically married to the text.) Then they go in. After more lessons, lunch, which, sadly for the lion, is fish fingers. Back to the playground, where Jack Tall outdances Betty by running closer and closer to her. "Go away" says the lion. "Shan't," says Jack. The lion growls, and slowly builds up to a roar over nine lines of text. Jack Tall runs "until he got home to his mother".

This simple fable about bullying might be regrettably arch. What saves it is the variety of voices offered to the reader, and the incidental humour. "The Great Sharp Scissors" begins "Once there was a boy called Tim who was often naughty. Then his mother used to say

There will be a one-day conference on Writers in Schools organized by the Literature Officers of the Council for Regional Arts Associations at Goldsmiths' College on Monday, March 24. Further information can be obtained from

"Tim" and his father shouted "TIM!" But his granny always said, "Tim's a good boy, really." The three voices sketched in here demand performance.

In "The Crooked Little Finger", Judy develops telekinetic powers and uses them to avenge a bout of larceny. "She wanted to think about all the things hidden in her pocket, and enjoy the thought; but, on the other hand, she didn't want to think about them at all. Especially, she didn't want to think about Simon Smith crying and crying for his pink pig india-rubber." Philippa Pearce understands the absurd poignancy of detail and how, as here, it can focus a complex of feeling. Her prose may at times seem staid, her world a little dated, her morality obvious, but the power to move and the embodiment of voice and detail are recognizably those, in a muted form, of the author of *Tom's Midnight Garden*.

## Tapping the junior brain-bank

Anthony Horowitz

GILLIAN CROSS  
The Prime Minister's Brain  
192pp. Oxford University Press. £5.95.  
0 19271489 9

Computer technology is a monster. Like a gigantic octopus it has entangled a whole generation in its tentacles. At home, the television doubles as a VDU, and books have been pushed into second place by "role-playing adventures". In the arcade, endless electronic whirs and buzzes accompany futile wars. At school, children are learning a language that is not so much foreign as positively alien. How do you tell a ROM from a RAM? Don't ask a technician, ask a ten-year-old.

The octopus is an apt central motif for Gillian Cross's entertaining new book, *The Prime Minister's Brain*. Once again the six children who form SPLAT (the Society for the Protection of Our Lives Against Them) rise up against the hypnotic powers of the Demon Headmaster—this time channelled through the waving arms of an octopus which is part of a computer game.

With this new book, the headmaster



One of Jon Riley's drawings in Raymond Wilson's anthology *Nine O'Clock Bell: Poems about school* (177p. Viking Kestrel. £5.95. 0670 801925). The 100-odd poems on the subject range in tone from Walter de la Mare to Roger McGough, with a strong bias against formal learning.

## Cause and effect

Peter Blake

NAT HENTOFF  
The Day They Came to Arrest the Book  
169pp. Angus and Robertson. £5.95.  
0207 151474

At the, significantly named, Georgia Mason High School, a black parent insists that *Huckleberry Finn* be removed from both the curriculum and the school library, because of "the profusion, the infestation of the word 'nigger' in this book". The school and then the town divide over the issue. Most of the black students, the headmaster, a feminist student, and the Citizens' League for the Preservation of American Values oppose the book, while the editor of the school paper, the teacher who set it as a text, the librarian, and the American Civil Liberties Union support it. The matter receives optional attention. And the outcome of a vote by the school board on whether to ban the book is unsure until Steve Turner, "a thin bespectacled black student who had refused to join the walkout from [the] class . . . in protest against the continued presence there of Huck Finn", speaks against the censorship: "I am very fortunate because nobody can protect me from this book any more. Even if they burn this book, I have read it. And I will never forget this book." The board then upholds Twain's First Amendment rights.

Not long ago, Nat Hentoff wrote some powerful articles in the *Village Voice* accusing the City Fathers and New York City's public libraries of abandoning their duty to children, and it is evident and praiseworthy that he regards this duty—a duty to have any book

readily available for reading—as sacred. And though it might be thought that his concerns are of little interest to readers in a country with no First Amendment to protect and without such powerful citizens' leagues, anyone who has followed the recent correspondence about *Huckleberry Finn* in *The Listener* and the progress of Winston Churchill's Obscenity Bill will realize that it is because we haven't got a First Amendment to protect us that we should be interested.

Hentoff's cause, then, is a good one, but Huck's victory over the censor is a sad story because the reason for this novel's failure. Steve Turner rescues Huck because, where his opponents have caricatured the book, substituted into a stereotype of bigotry, he has read the whole book, understood the context of the word "nigger", and grasped the double use of that, and of "good" and "evil" that Twain uses to mock with such skill to indict the hypocrites and vindicate the honest. But Huck bludgeons rather than manoeuvres. His characters speak in staged dialect; indeed the book contains three formal debates, and what they cannot find an opponent to help them with Hentoff's raw ingredients, characters drawn with empty chairs and pictures on the wall in office, doing the thought police in increasingly different voices. So while advocating freedom of opinion Hentoff is unwilling to let his characters and his readers loose of his control, and eventually this corrupts his purpose.

In *Huckleberry Finn* many of the bad characters are forthrightly self-righteous, while the good reluctantly duck and weave and make towards goodness. Hentoff is undoubtedly on the side of the good; he is, though, unfortunately self-righteously forthright.

quite live up to the idea. The actual conclusion is rather childish. The fantasy fails to pay because the author has all too casually dismissed the book—the arrival of the computer in the book—*is so unlikely as to be implausible*. Why are none of the characters excited? They aren't even provided with proper address. And although the book is so quickly and so simply that the effect is contrived to be truly satisfying.

There is also a distinction to be drawn between childish and childlike. If the usual perception was childlike, it might be said to give in to the spirit of the thing. But it seems out of sympathy with children's reality today. Her characters cannot without a show of remorse. Let loose, they can hardly wait to visit the Museum. "We played all sorts of games, one character enthuses, but he's quick to learn some things as well as others. . . . and learn some things as well as others. . . . not a little too responsible? It takes some of the oaths used by another. "Thundering—hamburger!" and "naughty, naughty!" it goes without thought that none of this is likely to be intended readership who will enjoy *The Prime Minister's Brain* and look

# Sales of books and manuscripts

H. R. Woudhuysen

While the larger auction houses are having a relatively quiet period, the smaller firms such as Phillips and Bloomsbury Book Auctions are doing rather well. Phillips's general sale on February 27 did not look as though it would attract an inordinate amount of attention, but to the event it was extremely successful. In particular colour-plate books were much in demand. Benjamin Wilkes's mid-eighteenth-century *The English Moths and Butterflies*, with 121 hand-coloured plates, made £3,400 to a private buyer, against a top estimate of £3,000. The volume was out in perfect condition, with some pencil and ink annotations, and it also was slightly foxed. The lots preceded it were in finer condition. They had been collected when an element of choice over which copy to buy of a book of this kind was still possible. The prices they reached reflected their physical state. William Roscoe's *Monardria Plants of the Order Scitamineae*, 1828, with 112 hand-coloured plates, went for £5,000, against an estimate of £2,000-£2,500. Henry J. Elwes's *A Monograph of the Genus Lilium* of 1880, with only forty-eight hand-coloured plates, went even further beyond its estimate of £1,500, going as high as £4,000, while Sydenham Edwards's *The New Flora Britannica*, 1812, made £1,050.

Earlier in the sale a small collection of Elgar material including a presentation copy of his very well-known *The Black Knight* op. 25,

inscribed "with love" to H.A. Leicester, fetched £140. Towards the end of the sale it was slightly surprising that a first edition with its original dust-wrapper of A.A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young*, 1924, went for £270 against an estimate of £60; first editions in their original limp leather bindings and their original boxes of *The House of Pooh Corner*, *Now We Are Six* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* fetched £170, £130 and £200 respectively. None of these prices includes the buyer's premium.

The second half of Bloomsbury Book Auctions' sale on March 20 is devoted to books about books, with a good collection of works on bookbinding (including standard and much prized works by Cyril Davenport, William Younger Fletcher, G.D. Hebsco and Howard Nixon), and a section of works on typography collected by James Shand. The first half of the sale is more general, with sections on art reference, science, travel and topography, English literature (including a rare Tasmanian printing of *The Pickwick Papers*, 1838-9, which is estimated at £500-£750) and some runs of periodicals.

Charles W. Traylen's *Catalogue 100* consists of eighty very attractive items to celebrate the eightieth birthday of the firm's founder. The catalogue contains only one manuscript, an early sixteenth-century French Book of Hours, but it also has some very rare and valuable early printed books. Among these are two fine English items, the Oxford 1482 printing of John Lathebury's *Liber Moralium Super Threnis Jeremiae* and 201 out of 222 leaves of Caxton's first edition of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.

## Preaching aids

C. R. Dodwell

ADRIAN WILSON and JOYCE LANCASTER  
Wilson  
A Medieval Mirror: Speculum humane saluationis 1324-1500  
228pp. University of California Press. £148.75.  
0 520 01947 7

"Videtur quod speculum in aenigmatum"—"For we see through a glass, darkly": St Paul's well-known image of a mirror in which we see but indirectly the workings of God was so widely expressed the lack of clarity with which the imperfect intelligence of humankind could perceive the perfection of God. It therefore appears in the titles of many medieval treatises or treatises—the *Speculum ecclesie*, the *Speculum peccatorum*, the *Speculum fidei*, the *Speculum christianitatis*, the *Speculum monachorum* and so on. There was nothing new, then, in the use of this image for the title of the *Speculum humane saluationis* when it first appeared in the early fourteenth century. Nor was there anything new in its typological method, which was inherent in the Gospels and much encouraged in the Epistles, where, for example (1 Peter), the story of Noah was seen as a prefiguration of the saving of souls by the water of baptism. This concept of types and antitypes was taken up by the early Fathers and by early Christian art, and was later developed into a highly sophisticated intellectual exercise that, towards the end of the twelfth century, the typological stained-glass windows of Chartreuse Cathedral display a resourcefulness for any indications of the New, that most of today, would consider very strained; and a simile written too about 1200 for the wall-painters of churches could claim no less than eighteen Old Testament parallels for a single New Testament event.

In medieval standards, the text of the *Speculum humane saluationis* was highly conventional. And its illustrations offered nothing new in proposing three pictures, chiefly from the Old Testament, as parallels to each of a New Testament illustration: even the illustrations often reached back to the role of these pictures in terms of art to encapsulate medieval traditions of traditional iconography (p. 216).

The authors are not scholars but book designers and printers. The interest of their

work, dated 1493 but actually printed in 1483. This copy has an interesting sixteenth-century provenance, having belonged to Edmund Peckham, probably the Privy Councillor and Master of the Mint, and his son's friend Anthony Brigham, who was interested in the exploration of America. Other English items include a very desirable volume containing first editions of Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* and his *Report of Germany*, with Thomas Wilson's translation of *The Three Orationes of Demosthenes*, 1570, Drayton's *Poly-Oibion*, 1613, and first editions of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Three items from John Evelyn's library are particularly fine: his copy of Vesalius's *Anatomia*, 1604, bound for Evelyn in a contemporary Parisian binding; his copy of the much sought after "Algonquin" translation of the New Testament, 1561, which he may have been given by Robert Boyle; and a presentation copy from the author Robert Morrison of his *Plantarum Umbelliferarum Distributio nova*, 1672, and *Plantarum Historiae Universalis Oxoniensis pars Secunda*, 1680.

Apart from a set of the Delphin classics bound for the Duke of Devonshire in straight-grained olive morocco, Troylen's riches from the later period mainly consist of illustrated books, with two Grangerized copies of Southey's life of Nelson, 1828, and Forster's life of Dickens, 1872-4, which as well as "portraits, views and various ephemera" also contains nine of Dickens's own letters. As one would expect, the prices in this celebratory catalogue of rich material are quite high.

that the themes of Dirk Bouts's triptych at Saint-Pierre in Louvain relate to it. Bouts was advised by two theologians, and the *Speculum humane saluationis* was itself basically a theological work—a *vide-mecum* for preachers to which the illustrations were used to instruct the uneducated who could not read. This view of art as a support to the faith goes back, of course, to the days of Gregory the Great, though the author still seems to feel it necessary to justify the ancient tradition. The reasons for this are complex; but it is worth observing that St Bernard's distrust of art had influenced the statutes of Dominican houses, and Lutz and Pedritz, followed by M. R. James, thought that the anonymous writer of the work was a Dominican, called Ludolph of Saxony. In *A Medieval Mirror: Speculum humane saluationis* 1324-1500, Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson veer towards the view of later students who opposed this attribution, though, in so doing, I think they fail to grasp the main point made by Lutz and Pedritz. They do accept, however, that the work was by a Dominican.

The fact that the first manuscripts established a format, in terms of their illustrations and text, which was closely followed by their descendants, was an important element in the transmission of medieval artistic traditions. The earliest descendants were, of course, 10 manuscript form. Well over eighty illustrated copies have survived, mostly in workaday editions, though some were handsomely produced, and the art of one Italian manuscript attracted the attention of Bernard Berenson. In dealing with the manuscript "editions" of the text, the Wilsons show a close knowledge of the secondary literature and occasionally make pertinent observations on the relationships of the manuscript texts, but they have nothing new to say about the manuscript pictures, though these were the justification and the source of popularity of the *Speculum*. The authors are not art historians nor would they claim to be such. Indeed, on one page they gently, but only too justifiably, rebuke some art historians for their limited methods of dating woodcuts; on others, the art historians might gently but with equal justification rebuke them—for example, for their lack of knowledge of the stylistic quality of thirteenth and fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts (p. 17) and their inadequate knowledge of traditional iconography (p. 216).

The authors are not scholars but book designers and printers. The interest of their work, dated 1493 but actually printed in 1483. This copy has an interesting sixteenth-century provenance, having belonged to Edmund Peckham, probably the Privy Councillor and Master of the Mint, and his son's friend Anthony Brigham, who was interested in the exploration of America. Other English items include a very desirable volume containing first editions of Ascham's *The Schoolmaster* and his *Report of Germany*, with Thomas Wilson's translation of *The Three Orationes of Demosthenes*, 1570, Drayton's *Poly-Oibion*, 1613, and first editions of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Three items from John Evelyn's library are particularly fine: his copy of Vesalius's *Anatomia*, 1604, bound for Evelyn in a contemporary Parisian binding; his copy of the much sought after "Algonquin" translation of the New Testament, 1561, which he may have been given by Robert Boyle; and a presentation copy from the author Robert Morrison of his *Plantarum Umbelliferarum Distributio nova*, 1672, and *Plantarum Historiae Universalis Oxoniensis pars Secunda*, 1680.

With some adjustments, most of these block-books used the same illustration-blocks, and the problems of the dates and sequence of their editions have been, and continue to be, the subject of debate. By reference to a date on a Munich copy, Henry Bradshaw provided a firm *terminus ante quem* of 1471, and, in 1958, Allan Stevenson deduced from their watermarks a sequence of the editions which has found general acceptance: 1) first Latin, 2) first Dutch, 3) second Latin and 4) second Dutch editions.

The Wilsons are at their best when they discuss these editions, and they offer useful observations on their relationships with the houses of the *Devotio moderna*, interesting insights into the aberrations of the second Latin edition, and on ideas on the date of the first, though these might have been modified if they had had access to an important article by Peter Koch. Their contributions from the practical point of view of the book-producer will need to be taken into consideration in any future discussion of the subject. Their book, for all its sixteen colour plates and numerous black-and-white ones, which include a complete run of the illustrations of the block-books, is, however, vastly overpriced.

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Entries are invited now, through the National Book League, for the 1986 Thomas Cook Travel and Guide Book awards, of £2,000 for the best travel book and £1,000 for the best guide book, written in English and published between 1 January 1985 and 31 October 1985.